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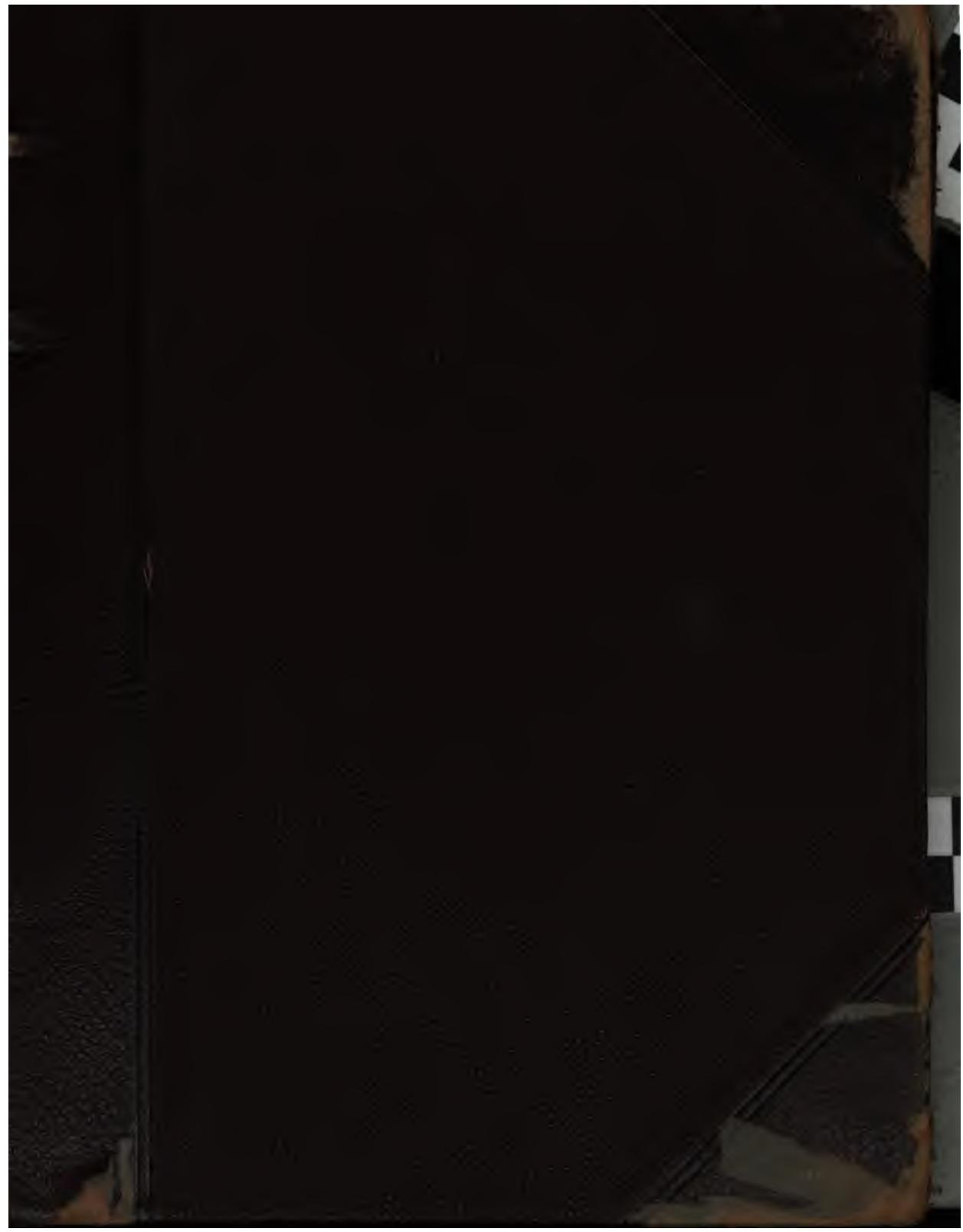
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Received 2 May, 1893.



THE
SPANISH LETTER

OF

COLUMBUS

TO

LUIS DE SANT' ANGEL

Escribano de Racion of the Kingdom of Aragon

DATED 15 FEBRUARY 1493

REPRINTED IN REDUCED FACSIMILE, AND TRANSLATED
FROM THE

UNIQUE COPY

OF THE ORIGINAL EDITION

(PRINTED BY JOHANN ROSENBACH AT BARCELONA
EARLY IN APRIL 1493)

LATELY

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P R E F A C E.

"THE greatest event which has happened since the creation of the world (leaving aside the incarnation and death of Him who made it) is the discovery of the Indies." Thus said Lopez de Gomara, in dedicating his history to Charles V, three hundred and forty years ago. The eloquent Spaniard was, of course, unable to realise the full import of his words, which seem to have been touched with the spirit of prophecy. Even the centuries behind him contained facts which he did not know, and which are hardly understood in our own days. There is some ground for believing that certain parts of the North American continent were visited, eight hundred years back, by Norsemen sailing from Iceland and Greenland, but we have slender means of verifying the uncritical narratives in which the story is related. Nothing came of the achievement. It began and ended like a flash of lightning, leaving the Western horizon as dark as before. Systems of civilisation, not very unlike our own earlier developments, grew up, and flourished, and died (or survived) beyond the further shores of the Atlantic while Abelard, William of Ockham, Roger Bacon, and Albertus Magnus gave their powerful intellects to the discussion *de omni scibili*, and died unaware of the existence of the vast regions of the West. We must not, however, allow that the Middle Ages were so densely ignorant as many writers have asserted. Numberless surprises for modern students lie in the perusal of forgotten books, the contents of which lend peculiar force to the phrase of the Bible—"There is nothing new under the sun."

A work called the *Image dou Monde* (a different book from the *Imago Mundi* of Pierre d'Ailly) was written towards the middle of the thirteenth century, in which one of the subjects discussed, is the spherical form of the earth and the possibility of making

its circuit. The conclusion arrived at, is a conditional negative: the feat, although possible,—the time being calculated at three years, and the circumference of the earth at twenty-two thousand miles—would not be practicable by reason of physical difficulties and the changes of climate.

In the first half of the fourteenth century, the world was made acquainted, by Marco Polo, with lands beyond the ken of Ptolemy, and men who studied geography learned that an ocean bounded Asia on the East, as an ocean bounded Europe on the West. With this knowledge, a spirit of exploration was evoked which became incarnate, soon after the beginning of the fifteenth century, in Prince Henry of Portugal. The efforts of the Portuguese in that century, to reach and turn the southern limit of Africa, so as to win by sea a passage to the golden shores of India—lost since the time of Alexander the Great, save in the glimpses afforded by Arab merchants and by Marco Polo—stimulated so keenly the desire for geographical discovery, that its fascination has not yet become inoperative.

Under the influence of that spirit, a Genoese mariner whom we call Christopher Columbus, set his heart upon traversing the ocean which he imagined lay between Europe and Cathay, in order to find a Western passage to India, as the Portuguese were seeking the Eastern. His hopes were not realised, for he found what he had not sought; but his efforts were crowned with the achievement so enthusiastically lauded in the first sentence of this preface, when he discovered the West Indies on Thursday, October 11th, 1492.

One of the chapters of the *Historia de los Reyes Catolicos*, by Andres Bernaldez, a man acquainted personally with Columbus, begins as follows:—In the name of God Almighty. There was a man of Genoa, a dealer in printed books, trading in this land of Andalusia, whom they called Christoval de Colon, a man of very high intellect without much book-learning, very skilful in the art of Cosmography and of the divisions of the world; who perceived, by what he read in Ptolemy, and in other books, and by his own discernment, how and in what wise is formed the world into which we are born and in which we move. This he placed within the

sphere of the heavens, so that it touches them upon no side, nor has aught of firmness to rest upon, but is only earth and water globed by heat within the hollow vault of the sky. And he considered of the way by which regions of much gold might be found, and esteemed that this world and firmament of earth and water is wholly traversable in circuit, as John of Mandeville relates; and he who should have shipping at his need, and should be willing to hold on his course by sea and by land, would assuredly be able to pass by the West in a straight line from San Vicente, and return by Jerusalem to Rome and to Seville; which would be the girdling of the whole earth and round of the globe. And he made, by his wit, a Mapa-mundi, and studied much therein; and judged that from whatever part of the ocean he should begin his passage, he could not fail to meet land, and he deemed, because he saw this, that regions of much gold would be found. Glad with his notion, and knowing that the King Don John of Portugal took much delight in discovery, he repaired thither to win his inclinations; and narrating the import of his reflexions, no credit was yielded him, because the King of Portugal had very eminent and well-trained mariners who esteemed not Colon, and who assumed that in the world there were no greater discoverers than they. Whereupon Christoval Colon betook himself to the court of the King Don Fernando and the Queen Doña Isabel, and made to them a relation of his ideas, to which they likewise gave but little heed. And he discoursed with them, and said that he was sure of what he told them; and explained to them the Mapa-mundi, so that he made them long to know of those lands. Quitting him, they summoned wise astrologers and astronomers, and courtiers skilled in cosmography, from whom they took advice. And the opinion of most of them, upon hearing the discourse of Christoval Colon, was that he spoke truth; insomuch that the King and the Queen became strongly trustful in him, and ordered that three ships should be given him at Seville, manned and victualled for the time that he required; and sent him, in the name of God and of our Lady, forth to make discoveries.—

In this chapter of Bernaldez, who proceeds to narrate the

events of the voyage as told by Columbus himself in the document written to the sovereigns—that source being indicated by several passages in the text—there is no allusion to certain circumstances which must be supplied from the *Historia de las Indias* of Bartolomé de las Casas, who was likewise a friend of the Admiral. He states that the result of the conference with philosophers, cosmographers, and astrologers, was a flat contradiction of the project of Columbus, and that “all in one voice said that it was complete folly and vanity.” Dismissed and disappointed, Columbus quitted Granada and took the road for Cordova in order to carry his schemes to the French court. Here we may go on in the words of Las Casas:—

↙

Amongst other persons who gave him aid at court, and desired that his task should be fulfilled and promoted, was Luis de Santangel, the *Escribano de Raciones*. He was as much grieved and saddened by this second and final rejection, without any hope, as though he had personally suffered it in some matter little less than life itself. Seeing Cristobal Colon thus dismissed, and being unable to endure the damage and disparagement which he deemed the sovereigns would incur, by losing the great benefits and riches which Cristobal Colon promised, if his words came true, and by letting another Christian king obtain them; as well as the degradation of their royal authority—which was so much esteemed in the world—through the lack of spirit to venture so trifling a cost for a gain so infinite; he, trusting in God, and in his intimacy with the sovereigns, or their estimation of his fidelity and of the desire which they knew he had to serve them, went boldly to the Queen, and spoke to her thus. “Lady, the desire which I have ever had to serve the King my Lord, and your Highness, insomuch that if it were necessary I would die for your royal service—has constrained me to appear before your Highness, in order to speak upon a matter which is no concern of mine, and which I am aware lies outside of the duties or limits of my office . . . I have wondered much that your Highness did not accept an empire such as this Columbus has offered . . . this business is of such a quality that if what your Highness thinks difficult or impossible, should be proposed to another King

and should prove successful, as this man says—and to any one who cares to understand, he gives good reasons for it—the result would be a manifest lessening of the credit of your Highness, and an injury to your kingdom. . . . Further, Lady, since what he asks for now is nothing but a million [of maravedis], and as it may be said that your Highness lets him go in order not to expend such an amount, this would indeed be of ill report; and it is in no wise fitting that your Highness should draw back from an enterprise so great, even though it were much more uncertain." The Catholic Queen, then, recognizing the good intention, and the zeal in her service, of Luis de Santangel, said that his desire was very pleasing to her, as well as his counsel, which she thought good to take, but that the matter must be deferred for a time until there should be more ease and leisure, as he could see in what straits they were already by reason of those wars which had been so protracted. "However, if it seem to you, Santangel," said the Queen, "that this man cannot brook any longer delay, I am willing to raise, upon my own private jewels, the money which he needs for fitting out his expedition, and arrangements therefor may immediately be set in course." Luis de Santangel went upon his knees, and kissed the hands of the Queen, in gratitude for the confidence in his judgment which she evinced by agreeing to an affair which was held so doubtful, and which every one opposed. And he added, "Most serene Lady, there is no need that, for this, your Highness's jewels should be pawned: it will be but a small service I shall render to your Highness, and to the King, my Lord, in lending the million from my own house, but let your Highness order Columbus to be sent for, who has, I believe, already gone." The Queen at once commanded that an officer of the court should post after Cristobal Colon, to say that she bade him return, and should bring him back. The alguacil found him two leagues from Granada, at the bridge of Pinos. Columbus returned with the officer, and was joyfully received by Santangel. When the Queen knew that he was come, she straightway gave order to the Secretary, Juan de Coloma, that he should with all speed apply himself to making out the letters of commission, and all such warrants as Columbus should think

necessary and require for his whole voyage and discovery. . . . In conclusion, this work, so heroic and stupendous in its nature and vastness, had to be begun with the aid of a million (of maravedis) lent by a servant of the sovereigns, a man of no great wealth; whereas no eyes have seen, no ears have heard, no heart has imagined, anything like the treasures which have since then poured into Castile from the Indies, and been lavished away by the Kings of Castile.—So far Las Casas.

Furnished with his commission, Columbus started for Palos, and there entered into negotiations to obtain the services of the three brothers Pinzon, rich and renowned mariners. The million lent by Santangel proved insufficient for the purpose in view, and Martin Alonso Pinzon advanced another half-million to the new Admiral; with which Columbus was enabled to complete all his arrangements. Three caravels were fitted out. In the Capitana, Columbus himself took the command with forty men; Martin Alonso Pinzon went as commander, with his brother Francisco as captain, in the Pinta, the fastest sailer of the three; and Vicente Yáñez Pinzon sailed in the Nina.

Early in the morning of the 3rd August, 1492, they weighed anchor and started from the little island of Saltes, opposite Huelva, in the port of Palos; and early in the morning of Friday, the 12th October, they sighted Guanahani, which is generally considered identical with Watling Island in the Bahamas. The voyage had thus occupied seventy-one days; and the statement in Columbus' printed letter that it was thirty-three days is usually supposed to be a blunder. Such is not the case. He reckoned only from the time of quitting the known outposts of Christendom, and his calculation of thirty-three days began when his ships, lying becalmed on the 7th September between Teneriffe and Gomera in the Canary Islands, were enabled to start on the following day with a N.E. wind, which bore them out into the ocean. Thus twenty-two days of September and eleven of October constituted what he regarded as the duration of his passage from land to land, from Christendom to the Indies.

All the circumstances of the voyage are familiar to the world. The chief authority is Columbus' own diary carefully written day

by day in the form of a letter to Ferdinand and Isabella. The original has long disappeared, but Las Casas, about 1520, made an abridged copy of it, occasionally giving the exact text, when he considered it impressive. This transcript still exists, and was published by Navarrete in 1825 (*Coleccion, Tomo I.*). We also find it embodied in the *Historia de las Indias* of Las Casas, a great and invaluable work printed for the first time in 1875. Clear evidence is afforded by an examination of the text that Columbus never failed in the duty of writing his daily record, notwithstanding all the mental and physical difficulties that encompassed his enterprise. Under such circumstances, it is easy to account for the blanks that occur here and there in the transcript made by Las Casas. The handwriting of the great Genoese, at the most favourable moments, was not very clear, as we can see by the facsimiles of holograph letters in the *Cartas de Indias*. What it must have been on ship-board in a boisterous ocean, we may imagine from the errors which appear in the various printed texts of the letter now republished, which we give in a reduced facsimile from the recently discovered unique copy of the first impression. That letter seems to have originated in the following manner.

On the return of Columbus, a terrible storm arose when he was approaching the Azores. From the night of the 12th February, until after sundown on the 14th, he was driven and tossed about under bare poles, with constant expectation of shipwreck. Fearing that the sovereigns would never learn the extent of his services, and dreading that his boys at Cordova would be left beggars in a strange land, the orphans of a discredited foreigner, he resolved to commit his story to the seas. He took a sheet of parchment and traced upon it as much as he could write about his great discovery; then wrapping it in a piece of cloth, well secured, he placed it in a barrel which was flung into the ocean. From the state of the sea, and the words "todo lo que pudo," we may conclude that the account was a very brief one, and would have been well-nigh illegible if it had ever reached the sovereigns to whom it was addressed. It is said by Ferdinand Columbus that he wrote the same letter in duplicate, and placed the second copy in another barrel, which was retained on board

to await the moment of the ship's dissolution ; but this statement is not found in Las Casas, and is probably a distortion of the fact that Columbus wrote the two letters about to be referred to. We may confidently assert that, under the circumstances, Columbus could hardly have managed to write more than a few lines ; and that consequently the barrel-letter need not be confounded with any extant piece of his composition. It is, however, very likely that the experience of the 14th of February would have set him thinking in regard to the desirability of multiplying the record of his voyage. From Wednesday morning (the 13th) till the night of Sunday (the 17th) he was unable to take any repose, and it was probably during the hours of night, when all active attention to the business of navigation was necessarily interrupted, that he applied himself to writing that compendium of his diary which we know as the letter of Columbus. However rapidly he might write, such a piece of work, regarded even as a transcript, must have occupied nine or ten hours at least, probably more. The likelihood is, that the night of the 14th and the morning of the 15th were given to the writing of the Carta al Escribano de Racion—our present letter ; and that on the 17th and 18th, when the sea was a little calmer, he made or caused to be made a transcript or second copy of it, which he addressed to the Treasurer Sanchez. The latter was, as a matter of course, more neatly and correctly written than the former : the violence of the storm had abated, and there was more leisure to improve the roughness of the original, as well as avoid its defects. This is easily observable in comparing the text of the Sanchez letter, as printed for the first time by Varnhagen in 1858, with that of the present reproduction. Although, however, the fair copy of an author's draught composition is usually superior to its original, yet the Sanchez letter has not entirely escaped the fate of most copies ; for there are some small matters, which have been pointed out elsewhere, in which its text is inferior to the other. Among the typographical blunders in our Santangel first edition, one small error may be particularised as showing that it followed an ill-written original. Columbus makes a statement twice—once near the beginning, and once near the end—that his outward voyage

(from the Canaries) had occupied thirty-three days. In our facsimile it will be seen that the printer blundered; and gave in the first instance "ueinte," in the second "xxxiii." The cause of the error (which was corrected in the [Naples?] reprint preserved in the Ambrosian library at Milan) is easily traceable. If we examine the writing of Roman numerals by Columbus in the facsimiles given in the *Cartas de Indias*, we see at once that Columbus must have used "xxxiii." in the first place, and perhaps written the number in words in the second place. In his writing, "xxxiii." would, to inexpert eyes, look like "veynt," and was so read by the printer. This can easily be tested by any one who chooses to examine the facsimiles of the writing of Columbus, and takes the trouble to imitate his method of forming the numerals in question.

The words which express the date of the Santangel letter show that on the 15th February Columbus thought himself close to one of the Canary Islands; on the 17th he discovered that the land he saw was Santa Maria in the Azores, and he specified the fact correctly in dating the Sanchez letter on the 18th, when he was anchored close to the island and had sent a boat ashore. The weather continued very bad, with occasional mitigations, till the 22nd when an improvement set in. In the evening of the 23rd, he set sail for Spain. On the night of March 2nd, his vessel was again in great danger not far from the coast outside Lisbon; on the night of March 3rd a still more terrible storm arose in which nearly all hope of safety was abandoned; and on the morning of the 4th, he succeeded, much to the wonder of himself and the inhabitants of the coast, in entering the mouth of the Tagus. He then wrote to the King of Portugal, asking permission to enter Lisbon. On the 8th he had a letter from the King, who was at Paraiso, nine leagues away, requesting his presence there. He was received with much courtesy by the monarch, notwithstanding the ill-will of the Portuguese officials who had already begun to show hostility. On the 11th he took leave of the King, on the 12th he decided not to make his way by land to Castile, notwithstanding the proffer of facilities from Dom João; and returned that night to his ship. At 8 o'clock on the following morning,

he set sail towards Seville, and early on the 15th he crossed the bar of Saltes and entered the port of Palos. According to his own statement the return voyage had occupied twenty-eight days; in which calculation he included only the space of time between the 18th or 19th January, when he knew that he was in the vicinity of Matinino, and the 16th February, when he found himself close to the Azores. From the latter date onwards, his progress was a stormy and dangerous one, and cost him twenty-three days (as he calculates) beating about "this sea." His reckoning is evidently meant to comprise the time from the 18th of February when he had anchored in the Azores to the 13th of March when he quitted Lisbon for Palos. It had been his intention to write to Ferdinand and Isabella from Lisbon (adonde acordé escrivir a sus Altezas) and we have no proof that he did not send some message announcing his return. But it is very improbable that he did so, when we know that he changed his mind on the subject of accepting Dom João's aid in travelling by land to Castile, and that he was prudently distrustful of his Portuguese friends. It is quite certain that he did not send off the Santangel letter till he reached Seville, since its postscript is dated March 14th. *A fortiori*, he would assuredly not have sent his important journal-letter to the sovereigns; and it is not likely, since he deferred the transmission of the Santangel epistle, that he would have risked the despatch of the improved copy of it which he had addressed to Sanchez. We have, besides, a reason in the date affixed to the Latin version of the latter, for supposing that it was still in his hands on March 14th.

With regard to the persons to whom Columbus addressed his compendious Letter, we have already seen good reason why his friend Luis de Santangel should have been considered a worthy recipient. As for Gabriel Sanchez, the Treasurer of Aragon, it must have been his official position which prompted the navigator to send him the second copy, or fair transcript. His good-will was a matter of no small moment to Columbus in connexion with he expected "muy poquita ayuda que sus Altezas me daran." His rank as a royal minister was higher than that of Santangel, and his power to influence the King greater. Santangel had

already been a successful intermediary with the Queen; Sanchez might be won over to perform an equally useful office with the King. However well-disposed Isabella might be, however large her independence in dealing with the states of Castile, Ferdinand was, after all, the real arbiter in their united councils. That Sanchez was personally a stranger to Columbus, and a man with whom he wished to ingratiate himself, would have been a reason for addressing to him the fair copy, more carefully transcribed than the original written three days earlier and addressed to Santangel. Hence we find that the Sanchez text is better than the other, but in a few instances the Santangel letter is decidedly superior.

As already shown, the primary existing authority, in point of fulness and detail, for the history of the first voyage of Columbus, is his own Diary, in so far as it was partly transcribed and partly abridged by Las Casas. But this transcript was never published until 1825, although Herrera and others made use of it in the sixteenth century. The primary authority, in point of publication to the world, is the Santangel letter written by Columbus on the 15th of February, 1493, printed, as we have reason to conclude, in the April of that year at Barcelona, and here published in reduced facsimile. The place of secondary authority must be assigned to the Sanchez letter (written by Columbus on the 18th of February, 1493), not in its original form—since the Spanish text was printed for the first time in 1858—but in the Latin version which appeared in 1493, and which was frequently reprinted and translated afterwards. Although the Santangel letter had been twice printed,—in its *princeps* state at Barcelona, and in a second edition elsewhere (of which the Ambrosian quarto is the only extant specimen)—before the publication of the Sanchez letter in Latin; those two editions must have been carefully suppressed by authority. Otherwise we could not account for the singular fact that no allusion is made to them by any of the writers of the sixteenth century, and that their very existence was unknown till the second edition was discovered about thirty years ago in the Ambrosian library at Milan, and the first was found three years ago in Spain. There is no date of impression or printer's name upon

either; but the type of the Spanish folio is that which was used by Johann Rosenbach at Barcelona in 1493-94. The Spanish quarto is evidently later, as is shown by various technical peculiarities of correction and error; but they both naturally preceded the editions of the Latin translation which was printed out of Spain—as was also indeed the Spanish quarto. The Spanish scholar Asensio, in a book upon Columbus published in 1891, asserts that the Ambrosian quarto emanated from a Seville press, and concludes that it was printed there when the discoverer had reached that city on his way from Palos to Barcelona. He forgets that Columbus was not a professional author, and that nothing would have induced him to put the letter in type before it had been delivered to the gentleman to whom it was addressed. It was a private communication, and can only have been given to the press by Santangel or one of his intimate friends then in attendance on the King and Queen at Barcelona. If the Ambrosian quarto was really printed at Seville, it must have been some weeks later than the Barcelona impression. But internal evidence shews that the quarto was printed in Italy, there being numerous instances of the substitution of the initial *j* in words requiring *i* or *y*. The Spaniards frequently used *i* for *j*, but never in any case converted an initial *i* into *j*, the two letters being differently sounded in Spain while in Italy they were homophonous.

During the last three or four years certain quartos (three in number) have made their appearance in the world, produced by typography, and purporting to be fifteenth century editions of the Spanish text. There is, however, no appearance of antiquity about them, and they are evidently clumsy attempts to reproduce the Ambrosian quarto with sufficient inexactness to pass as variant editions.

It is frequently asserted that Columbus never learned that Cuba was an island, or anything other than the coast of Cathay. But the statement made in this letter (on the 19th and 20th lines of the facsimile), shows clearly enough that he had heard and believed it to be an island, as his Indian prisoners had informed him.

SEÑOR porque se que ay en el plazer dela grande victoria que nuestro señor me ha dado en mi viaje vos eterno era por la qual sabreys como enemigo dias pase A las idas co la armada q los illustrissimos Rey e Reyna sus señores me dieron podesyo falle muy muchas Islas pobladas co gente sin numero : y de las todas se tomado posesion por sus altezas con pregón y uader a real estendida y non me ha e contra idicho Alia primera q yo falle puse nombre sanc salvador a comemoracion de su alta image et el qual maravillosoamente todo esto anodado los idios la llaman guanabana Alia segunha puse nombre la illa de santa maria de concepcion alia tercera ferrandina alia quarta la illa bella alia quinta la Illa Juana e asi a cada una nombre nuevo Quando yo llegue a la Juana segui io la costa della al oriente y la falle tan grande q pense que seria tierra firme la proximia de catayo y como no falle astillas y lugares cala costa dela mar salvo pequenas poblaciones con lagente de las q uales nropedia bauter fabla por q: luezo fay ar todos: andaua yo a deante por el dicho camino pccado deuo errar grandes Ciudades o villas y al cabo de muchas leguas visto q no havia inonacion q la costa me levara al setentrión de adóde mi voluntad en la contraria po q el raiemo era ya cercano yo tenia proposito rebazar del al austro y tan bien el vieto medio adelante determine dello aguardar otoño tiepo y bolui arras hasta un señaldo punto de adóde ibie dos bôrres por la tierra para saber si havia Rey o grandes Ciudadades adont en tres iornadas y hallazò infinitas poblaciones peculiares q gote si nro hierro mas no cosa duey sumido por lo qual seboliqiezo yo entedra barto de otros idios q ia tenia tomados como conti nuamente esta tierra en Illa e alii segui la costa della al oriente ciento e siete leguas hasta donde fazia fin del qual cabo vi otra Illa al oriente distanca de esta diez o ocho leguas ala qual luego puse nombre la spañola y fui alli y segui la parte del setentrión alii como dela marina al oriente chxviii grandes leguas por linea recta del oriente alii como dela marina la qual y todas las otras son fortissimas en demasidao grado y este encastreno en ella ay muchos puentes calos costas vidas mar si copariacion de otros q yo sepa en cristianos y fantas mios y buenos y grandes q es mar villa las tierras della so altas y esella muy muchas sierras y montañas altisimas si copariacion de la illa de gepe fra toutes fortissimas de mil seburas y todas adables y llenas de arboles de mil maneras tales q parecen q llega al cielo alegre por oyo q tamas picroclaforia segun lo puede copirder q los vi en verano i ta hermoso como lo por mayo en spaña i odoles flava flor nros dellos co friso i dellos enotremismo segun la calidad i corona el nro setenta paxaricos demil quinientos en el mes de enero qiebre por qdlo qdlo lo qdlo ay palmas de fca vde ocho maneras q es admiration ferrosa dellos mas asieno los o otros arboles y frutos e cetas en dia ay piunas amarilla eay canpias grandissimas eay en el i de muchas maneras de ques y frutas muy buenas calas tiertas ay muchas quinas come tales eay gote istimable numero La spañola es maravilla la siertas y las montañas y las negras sierras campinas y las tiertas tan fermolas y granas para plantar y sembrar paciar ganados de todo das que les para hermosos de villas eligentes los puentes dela mar aqua no havia dencia sua vista y dellos rios muidos y grandes y bacanas ayunas los i as dellos queales traen oto e los arboles y frutos e yemas ay grandes diferencias de aquel las calas son en esta ay muchas si eran y grandes qmadas de oto y de otros muerdes Y a gente desti villa se qdadas las otras q be fallado y banido ni ay bautizo noticia andan todos desfuidos hñbres y mujeres asi como sus madres los parecban que algunas amigas se cobijan en solo lugar co una foia de yno o una cosa de algodon quepa ello fazez qdlos no tienen fuerza ni azco su annas nro a uno no por que no sea gente bien dispuesta y de ferrosa constitucion salvo que no muy se amparauilla no tiene otras armas salvo las ruedas calas quinientos q sola fuerza q al poniente al cabo un parillo segudo en uno de las vies de aquellas que no ay veyr qdlos que no cambian qdadas dos exces hombres algunes vilas pa bautz fabl

Si un nro: y despues q los rey's llegan fuyan a no aguardar padre a hijo y esto no por que a ninguno se aya hecho mal antes a todo cabo ademas yo aya estado y podes bener fabla les hecha do de todo lo que tenia asi paño como otras cosas muchas si recibe por ello cosa alguna mas so asi temerosos sin remedio: vstad es q que despues que a segun y pierde este mundo ellos son tanto si engano y tan liberales odo q tiene que no lo creian sin el qlo viene: ellos de cosa queegan pidiendo gela iamas qdye deno antes convidan lapsona co dloq nuiestran tanto amor que danian los corazones y quieren sea cosa de qualquier quien sea de pocp precio luego por qual que era cosa de qual quiera manera que sea q se de deposito sea contentos: yo defendi q nosedes o sen cosas tan sencillas como pedazos de circuillas rotas y pecas de violao zoto y cabos dagas: han que quando ellos esto podia llegar los parecia bener lamedos ioya del mundo. que se acero bener un manzco por una agujeta de oro de pesos dos castellanos y medio: podes de otras cosas q muy mncs valia mucho mas ya por blacas muchas vanan por otras todo quanto q nian han q fucien dos ni trd castellanos de oro o una arzona o dos de algodn filo do hasta los pedazos delos arcos rotos de las pipas tonuan loq tenian como bestias as asi que me parecio mal: yo lo defecio y davan yo graciosas mil cosas buenas q se leian por que tomen a noz y alrededor se fan cristianos que se dicinan al amorecenicio de sus altezas y de toda la nació castellana: epocura de auitar de nos dar delas cosas que tiene en abundancia q nos so necessarias y no conocian ninguna sera ni isolatna salvo q todos creen q las fuerzas yelbe es circulo y creian muy fime que yo q dicosnarios y gente venida del cielo yentil catamiento me recibian entodo cargo despues de bener podo clinico y esto no procede porq seian ignorantes salvo denny sotil ingenio y obres que nauegan todas aquellas mares q es maravilla labuena cuchara quelllos dan de todos salto porquenunca viene gte vestido nismeian tes nrios y luego que lege alas sotas da pri uera isla q halle tome pforza algunos dellos para qe deprendien yme dicie nota odo q aua en aquellas partes sali fue que luego estendio y nos nelloz quando por lengua oyeron: yeslos ban apronchado mucho oy enria los traigo q scipesta ceoposito q vego del cielo por mucha conversacion q ayan bawido comigo y estos eran los primeros q pronunciarlo adonde yo llegaria y los otros avanzan corriendo decia q casa y alas villas cercanas co bozes altre veces venian auxi lagente del cielo asi todos bôbres como magres despues de bener el corazon seguro de nos venian q no cadan grande ni pequeño ni todos trajan algu decomer y debener quedauan co vn amor maravilloso ellos tienen todas las sutas muy muchas canoras anganeta desfistes dentro de las masoras dellos mayores y algunas: muchas so mayores q bina fusta dedies cocho bâcos: molô tan anchas porque lo daban solo madeo mas buna fusta notorio co claus a: r:mo porque van qno es cosa de creer y co elas nauegan todas aquellas ilas q son innumerables: tratâs sis mecederas algunas de las cauas be visto co lcr y los bôbres enella seada uno co suremo ensodas estas ilas no vide mucha diversidad dela secura dela gente ni en las costumbres ni en la lengua: salvo q todos se entienden q cosa muy singular para lo que eligeo q determinaran sus altezas para la couencion de los de nuestra sanita fe a la qual so muy displicios: ya que como robaria de dho e: vii legnas podia costa dela mar por la drecta linea considerate aoniente por la illa trama segù el qual crimo puedo desir q esta ala qmniaor que inglaterra y escocia tanta por q salide das e: vii legnas me quedo dela parte deponerle dos provinias q esto node sonda: la una de las qmias llaman auau: qghue nre lagere coccola las qmias provinias no puden tener en longura mas de lo q: legnas segun puden entorder destos ieios q yo tengo los qmias saben todo s: las qmias otra el qmniaor el qmniao tiene mas q la el qmniao toba desde colomia por costa de mar hasta fute rania en niscaya puen en una quadra andouie dextrum granos legnas por recia bin: de occident a oriente este es para dcir: e: i: es para nre nica cedat enla qual peneblos qmniao longo & possibl por sus altezas y todas son mas abeladas delo qmniao

se y puedo dezir y todas las tengo por de sus alteras qual dellas pueden disponer como y taucó
plazamete como delos Reynos de castilla en ésta se pasea en el lugar mas concubile y nior
comarca para las minas del oro y todo trato así de la tierra fina de aqua como de a quella
decalla del gran can a sólo se dava una grana trato egua mala bermuda o pescado e una villa gran
de aqua qual pase nôbre la villa denunciado; y en ella besebo fuerza y fortaleza que ya actebo
sas clara del todo acabada y bendecido euella gente que abulta para sembrar fecho con annas
y arrellanas e vinalias por mas de un año fructa y maestra dda mar entadas artes para fazer
ceras y grande amistad co d' Rey de aquella tierra en tanto grado que se preceaua dene llamar y
etener por hermano e bas que le mandase la voluntad a offendere esta gente el nulos siuos nolabé
que sean amios y andan desnudos como yabe dicido só los mas temerosos que ay en el mundo
asique solamente la gente que ala queda es para destreza toda aquella tierra y es ysla lipedro
de sus pernas sabieu dolceregr ento das estas islas me parece que todos los óbres sean côte
tos co via magre i alia maior al o Rey van farta; verane las mugeres me parece que trabajan
mas que los óbres ui bendecido en tener sienien bieues propios que me parecio ver q a qullo
que uno tenia todos basian parte en especial delas cosias comeras en éstas illas hasta aqui
no bendecido óbres mostrados como muchos peculanian mas antes etoda gente tenia lindo
acatamiento q lo negros como q grineas saluo co sus zabellos corredios y molestian adódicay
speto denalidado delos rayos solares es verdad quel se la lucen q gli q andan fuerca puello que esdi
distina dela linea i qui uocial veire esas grádes ci cihas illas adódicay móntas grandes ay tensa
a fuerca el frío este yuerno: uiselllos lo sufrin postra costumbre que ésta ayuda de las viandas
comen co especias muchas y muy calientes en cimasia: asique mostruos no se hallado ninoti
q saluo de vna isla que es aqui en la segunda ala currida delas indias q es poblada devia
ente que tiene en todas las yslas por muy fechos los quales come carne viviana qlos tiene
muchas canaus colas qales conté todas las yslas de idia sób y tomó quanto pneden delos
no só mas ziformes q los otros saluo q tiene en costumbre extraer los cabellos largos com
omagres y vian arcos y flechas delas muermas armas de cimia co un palillo alcabo por dífic
to de fiero q no tiene só ferre yes entre estos otros pueblos que só cemasiado grado couardes
mas yo no los tengo en nada mas que alos otros q lo aquello q traen colas mugeres
demasiadomo q es laprincia y ysla partiendo desparta para las idias q se falla en la qual no ay
bóbreniquio: ellas no vía exercio femenil saluo arcos y flechas como los sobre dichos de cañas
picamian y cobigan colauines de arambre de que tiene mucho otra ysla inseguiran mayor q la
española en que las psonas no tienen ningüi cabello. En esta ay oyo si cuenta y de las y delas o
e ras traigo comigo idios para testimoniyo: e conclusio afablar desto solamente que sea fecho este
viage que fuese de corona que puede veras alteras qyo lecdate oro quanto ouiere menester con
muy poquita ayuda q las alteras medora agora spciandy y algend quanto sus alteras medora
cargar y almásifica quanta mandaran cargar e dela qual hasta oy no seba fallado saluo en gre
ca en la ysla de pio y el senorio la uenue como quiere y lignualde quanto mandaran cargar y es
claudo quatos mandaran cargar e seruadlos y eclarles y creio haue fallado ruybaruo y caue
la e otras mil cosas ocultan fallare que han au fallado la gente que yo alla devo porqye yo
nomébe detenido nñigüi cabo en quanto diuiso ave aia dado lugaz deveniagre solamente cu la
villa de nauicio en quanto deje alegurado. Si bien alegado Es ala verdad mucha mias ficiena
si los nauios que simueran como o raso denunciado. Esto es basto; deuo dios u nistro seño
el qual da a todos aquellos q andan encamino victoria de cosas que parecen imposibles; yesta
senaladamente fuerza una por q b aí que verbas tierra aqüi fallado. Ecripto todo va por co
lectura sin allegor o exusta saluo comprendiendo a tanito que los oyentes los mas crebanzai e
misanian mas por fable que por poche dello asi que pues nuestro: Recuitor dio alta vic
toria Almeidz Illustrissimos rey: etrey: eaf: reynos famosos de: q alia cosa si deved foda

La cristianidad deve tomar alegría y fazer grandes fiestas y dar gradas solemnes a la santa Trinidad con muchas oraciones solemnes por el tanto en el cálizimiento que bairran en tornando se tantos pueblos a nuestra santa fe y despues por los bienes temporales que no solamente a la España mas a todos los cristianos traen aqui refugio y ganancia esto segun el fecho a si embriego fecha en la calauera sobre las yllas de canana a xv de febrero año M.DL. cccclxxviii.

Fara lo que mandareys El Almirante

Anima que venia dentro en la Carta.

Despues desti escrito; y estando en mar de Castilla salio tanto viendo con migo. su y suerte que meba fecho a descargor los naus y po cog. aqui en este puerto de lisbona oy que fue la mayor maravilla del mundo adonde acorde escrivir asyse alvejas. en todas las yllas de siempre bailando y los temporales como en mayo adonde yo fui en xxi dias y volvi en xviii salio quicadas tomen mas que me ave tenido s. iiii dias costeando por esta mar: dijen aqua todos los bobres oda marqua mas uno que en mal y ultimo no tu tantas perdidas de naves fecho ha quicadas de mayo;

ESTA Carta en bio Colon Alzimano Denacio
De las Yllas Halladas en Las Indias: Landa
A Dns De Qs Alvejas

C A R T A
DE
CRISTOVAL COLON
AL ESCRIBANO DE RACION
LUIS DE SANT' ANGEL

(*With the obvious typographical errors corrected.*)

SEÑOR,

Porque sé que avreis plazer de la grand vitoria que nuestro Señor me ha dado en mi viaje, vos escrivo esta por laqual sabreys como en xxxiii dias pasé á las Indias (con la armada que los illustrissimos Rey e Reyna nuestros Señores me dieron) donde yo fallé muy muchas islas pobladas con gente sin numero; y dellas todas he tomado posesion por sus Altezas con pregón, y vandera rreal estendida, y non me fue contradicho. A la primera que yo fallé, puse nombre Sant Salvador á comemoracion de Su alta Magestad El qual maravillosamente todo esto ha dado: los Indios la llaman Guanahaní. A la segunda puse nombre La Isla de Santa Maria de Concepcion; á la tercera, Fernandina; á la quarta La Isabela; á la quinta La Isla Juana; e asi á cada una nombre nuevo. Quando yo llegué á la Juana, segui yo la costa della al Poniente, y la fallé tan grande que pensé que seria Tierra firme, la provincia de Catayo; y como no fallé asi villas y lugares en la costa de la mar, salvo pequeñas poblaciones con la gente de las quales no podia haver fabla porque luego fuyan todos,—andava yo adelante por el dicho camino, pensando de no errar grandes ciudades ó villas; y al cabo de muchas leguas, visto que no havia innovacion, i que la costa me levava al Setentrion, de donde mi voluntad era contraria porque el invierno era ya encarando, yo

tenia proposito de hazer d^el al Austro ; y tanbien el viento me dió adelante. Determiné de no aguardar otro tiempo, y volvi atrás hasta un señalado puerto, de donde enbié dos hombres por la tierra para saber si havia Rey o grandes ciudades. Andovieron tres jornadas, y hallaron infinitas poblaciones pequeñas i gente sin numero, mas no cosa de regimiento ; por lo qual se bolvieron. Yo entendia harto de otros Indios que ya tenia tomados, como continuamente esta tierra era isla ; e asi segui la costa della al Oriente ciento i siete leguas hasta donde fazia fin ; del qual cabo, vi otra isla al Oriente, distinta de esta diez y ocho leguas á la qual luego puse nombre La Española. Y fui alli, y segui la parte del Setentrion, asicomodo de la Juana, al Oriente, clxxxviii grandes leguas, por linea recta del Oriente, asicomodo de la Juana ; la qual y todas las otras son fertilisimas en demasiado grado, y esta en estremo. En ella, ay muchos puertos en la costa de la mar, sin comparacion de otros que yo sepa en Cristianos, y fartos rrios, y buenos y grandes, que es maravilla. Las tierras della son altas, y en ella muy muchas sierras y montañas altissimas sin comparacion de la Isla de Tenerife ; todas fermosissimas de mil fechuras, y todas andables y llenas de arboles de mil maneras i altas, i parecen que llegan al cielo. I tengo por dicho que jamás pierden la foja, segun lo puedo comprehendier que los vi tan verdes i tan hermosos, como son por Mayo en España. Y dellos estavan floridos, dellos con fruto, i dellos en otro termino segun es su calidad ; i cantava el ruiseñor i otros paxaritos de mil maneras, en el mes de Noviembre, por alli donde yo andava. Ay palmas de seis o de ocho maneras, que es admiracion verlas por la disiformidad fermosa dellas ; mas asicomodo los otros arboles y frutos e yervas. En ella ay pinares á maravilla, e hay campiñas grandissimas, y ay miel, i de muchas maneras de aves, y frutas muy diversas. En las tierras ay muchas minas de metales, e ay gente inestimable numero. La Española es maravilla : las sierras y las montañas y las vegas, i las campiñas, y las tierras tan fermosas y gruesas para plantar y senbrar, para criar ganados de todas suertes, para hedificios de villas e lugares. Los puertos de la mar aqui no havria crehencia sin vista, y de los rios muchos y grandes, y buenas aguas, los mas de los quales traen oro. En los

arboles y frutos e yervas, ay grandes differencias de aquellas de la Juana. En esta ay muchas especierias, y grandes minas de oro y de otros metales. La gente desta ysla y de todas las otras que he fallado, y havido (ni aya havido) noticia, andan todos desnudos, hombres y mugeres, asi como sus madres los paren, haunque algunas mugeres se cobijan un solo lugar con una foja de yerva, o una cosa de algodon que para ello fazen. Ellos no tienen fierro ni azero ni armas ni so[n par]a ello, no porque no sea gente bien dispuesta y de fermosa estatura salvo que son muy te[merosos] á maravilla. No tienen otras armas, salvo las a[rm]as de las cañas quando est[an] con la simiente á [la] qual ponen al cabo un palillo agudo, e no osan usar de aquellas: que m[uchas] veces me [ha aca]escido embiar á tierra dos o tres hombres á alguna villa para haver fabl[a, y] salir á [ellos dellos] sin numero; y despues que los veyan llegar, fuyan á no aguardar padre á hijo. Y esto no porque á ninguno se aya hecho mal, antes á todo cabo á donde yo aya estado y podido haver fabla, les he dado de todo lo que tenia, asi paño como otras cosas muchas, sin recibir por ello cosa alguna; mas son asi temerosos sin remedio. Verdad es, que despues que aseguran, y pierden este miedo, ellos son tanto sin engaño y tan liberales de lo que tienen, que no lo creerian sino él que lo viese. Ellos de cosa que tengan, pidiendosela, jamás dizen de nó; antes convidan la persona con ello, y muestran tanto amor que darian los corazones; y quier sea cosa de valor, quier sea de poco precio, luego por qualquiera cosica, de qualquiera manera que sea, que seles dé por ello, sean contentos. Yo defendi que no seles diesen cosas tan ceviles como pedazos de escudillas rotas, y pedazas de vidrio roto, y cabos de agugetas—haunque quando ellos esto podian llegar, les parecia haver la mejor joya del mundo. Que se acertó haver un marinero por una agueta de oro de peso de dos castellanos y medio; y otros, de otras cosas que muy menos valian, mucho mas. Ya, por blancas nuevas, davan por ellas todo quanto tenian, haunque fuesen dos ni tres castellanos de oro, o una arrova o dos de algodon filado. Fasta los pedazos de los arcos rotos de las pipas tomavan, y davan lo que tenian, como bestias; asi que me pareció mal. Yo lo defendí, y dava yo graciosas mil cosas buenas que yo levava, porque tomen amor, y

allende desto se fagan Cristianos;—que se inclinan al amor e servicio de sus Altezas, y de toda la nacion Castellana; e procuran de ajuntar de nos dar de las cosas que tienen en abundancia, que nos son necessarias. Y no conocian ninguna seta nin idolatria, salvo que todos creen que las fuerças y el bien es en el cielo; y creian muy firme que yo, con estos navios y gente, venia del cielo; y en tal acatamiento me recebian en todo cabo, despues de haver perdido el miedo. Y esto no procede porque sean ignorantes, —salvo de muy sotil ingenio; y onbres que navegan todas aquellas mares, que es maravilla la buena cuenta qu' ellos dan de todo— salvo porque nunca vieron gente vestida ni semejantes navios. Y luego que llegué á las Indias, en la primera isla que hallé, tomé por fuerza algunos dellos para que deprendiesen y me diesen noticia de lo que avia en aquellas partes; e asi fue que luego entendieron y nos á ellos, quando por lengua o señas. Y estos han aprovechado mucho. Oy en dia los traigo, que siempre estan de proposito que vengo del cielo, por mucha conversacion que ayan havido conmigo. Y estos eran los primeros á pronunciarlo donde yo llegava, y los otros andavan corriendo de casa en casa, y a las villas cercanas, con voces altas: Venid! venid á ver la gente del cielo. Asi todos, honbres como mugeres, despues de haver el corazon seguro de nos, venian, que no quedavan grande ni pequeño, y todos trayan algo de comer y de bever que davan con un amor maravilloso. Ellos tienen [en] todas las yslas muy muchas canoas á manera de fustas de remo, dellas mayores, dellas menores, y algunas y muchas son mayores que una fusta de diez e ocho bancos. No son tan anchas porque son de un solo madero, mas una fusta no terná con ellas al remo porque van que no es cosa de creer; y con estas navegan todas aquellas islas que son innumerables, y tratan sus mercaderías. Algunas destas canoas he visto con lxx y lxxx [h]onbres en ella, y cada uno con su remo. En todas estas islas no vide mucha diversidad de la fechura de la gente, ni en las costumbres, ni en la lengua salvo que todos se entienden; que es cosa muy singular para lo que espero que determinaran sus Altezas para la conversacion dellos de nuestra santa fe, á la qual son muy dispuestos. Ya dixe como yo havia andado cvii leguas por la costa de la mar, por la derecha

linea de Occidente á Oriente, por la isla Juana; segun el qual camino puedo decir que esta isla es maior que Inglaterra y Escocia juntas; porque, allende destas cvii leguas, me queda de la parte de Poniente dos provincias que yo no he andado,—la una de las quales llaman Avan, donde nacen la gente con cola—las quales provincias no pueden tener en longura menos de 1 ó lx leguas, segun puedo entender destos Indios qu[e] yo tengo, los quales saben todas las yslas. Esta otra Española en cierco tiene mas que la España toda desde Co[libre en Cata]luña por costa de mar fasta Fuenteravia en Viscaya; pues en una quadra anduve clxxxviii grandes leguas por recta linea de Occident[e] á Oriente. Esta es para desear; e v[ista] es para nunca dexar. En la qual,—puesto [que de to]das tenga tomada possession por sus Altezas, y todas sean mas abastadas de lo que yo sé y puedo dezir y todas las tengo por de sus Altezas quales dellas pueden disponer como y tan complidame[n]te como de los reynos de Castilla—en esta Española, en el lugar mas convenible y mejor comarca para las minas del oro, y de todo trato asi de la tierra firme de acá, como de aquella de allá del gran Can, donde havrá grand trato e ganancia, he tomado possession de una villa grande, á la qual puse nonbre la villa de Navidad; y en ella he hecho fuerza y fortaleza—que ya á estas horas estará del todo acabada—y he dexado en ella gente que basta para semejante fecho, con armas y artellarias, e vituallas por mas de un año, y fusta y maestro de la mar en todas artes para fazer otras: y grand amistad con el Rey de aquella tierra en tanto grado que se preciava de me llamar y tener por hermano. E aunque le mudase la voluntad á offendre esta gente, el ni los suios no saben que sean armas, y andan desnudos. Como ya he dicho, son los mas temerosos que ay en el mundo; asi que solamente la gente que allá queda es para destruir toda aquella tierra; y es ysla sin peligro de sus personas sabiendo se regir. En todas estas islas me parece que todos los [h]onbres sean contentos con una muger, i a su maioral, ó rey, dan fasta veinte. Las mugeres me parece que trabaxan mas que los [h]onbres. Ni he podido entender si tenian bienes propios; que me pareció ver que aquello que uno tenia, todos hazian parte, en especial de las cosas comederas. En estas islas, fasta aqui, no

he hallado [h]onbres monstruos, como muchos pensavan ; mas antes es toda gente de muy lindo acatamiento, ni son negros como en Guinea, salvo con sus cabellos correntios ; y no se crian donde ay impeto demasiado de los rayos solares. Es verdad qu' el sol tiene alli grand fuerça puesto que es distinta de la linea equinocial veinte e seis grados. En estas islas donde ay montañas grandes, áhi tenia fuerça el frio este ynvierno ; mas ellos lo sufren por la costumbre con la ayuda de las viandas que comen con especias muchas y muy calientes en demasia. Asi que monstruos no he hallado, ni noticia, salvo de una ysla que es aqui la segunda á la entrada de las Yndias, que es poblada de una gente que tienen en todas las yslas por muy ferozes, los quales comen carne humana. Estos tienen muchas canoas con las quales corren todas las yslas de India, roban y toman quanto pueden. Ellos no son mas diformes que los otros, salvo que tienen en costumbre de traer los cabellos largos como mugeres, y usan arcos y flechas de las mismas armas de cañas con un palillo al cabo por defecto de fierro que no tienen. Son ferozes entre estos otros pueblos que son en demasiado grado cobardes, mas yo no los tengo en nada mas que á los otros. Estos son aquellos que tratan con las mugeres de Matinino, que es la primera ysla partiendo d'Espanña para las Indias que se falla ; en la qual no ay hombre ninguno. Ellas no usan exercicio femenil, salvo arcos y flechas, como los sobre dichos de cañas ; y se arman y cobijan con laminas de arambre de que tienen mucho. Otra ysla me aseguran mayor que la Espanola en que las personas no tienen ningun cabello. En esta ay oro sin cuento, y destas y de las otras traigo co[n]migo Indios para testimonio. E[n] conclusion, á fablar desto solamente que sea fecho este viage que fue asi de cor[r]ida, que pueden ver sus Altezas q[ue] yo les daré oro quanto [h]ovieren menester, con muy poquita ayuda que sus Altezas me daran; agora [e]speciaria y algodon quanto sus Altezas mandaran cargar, y almastica quanta mandaran cargar—e de la qual fasta [h]oy no se ha fallado salvo en Grecia en la ysla de Xio, y el Señorio la vende como quiere — ; y lignumaloe quanto mandaran cargar, y esclavos quantos mandaran cargar,—y seran de los ydólatras ; y creo haver fallado ruybarbo y canela. E otras mil cosas de sustancia fallare que havran fallado

la gente que yo allá dexo. Porque yo no me he detenido [en] ningun cabo en quanto el viento me aya dado lugar de navegar ; solamente en la villa de Navidad en quanto dexé asegurado e bien asentado. E á la verdad mucho mas ficiera si los navios me sirvieran como razon demandava. Esto es harto : y [gracias á ?] eterno Dios nuestro Señor el qual da á todos aquellos que andan su camino victoria de cosas que parecen imposibles—y esta señaladamente fue la una ; porque aunque destas tierras ayan fablado ó escripto, todo va por conjectura sin alegar de vista ; salvo comprendiendo á tanto que los oyentes los mas escuchavan e juzgavan mas por fabla que por poca cosa dello. Así que pues nuestro Redemtor dió esta victoria a nuestros illustrisimos Rey e Reyna, e á s[us] reynos famosos, de tan alta cosa, donde toda la Christiandad deve tomar alegría, y fazer grandes fiestas, y dar gracias solennes á la sancta Trinidad, con muchas oraciones solennes por el tanto enxalçamiento que havran en tornandose tantos pueblos á nuestra sancta fe, y despues por los bienes temporales que no solamente á la España mas á todos los Christianos, ternan aqui refrigerio y ganancia. Esto segun el hecho, asi en breve.

Fecha en la caravela sobre las yslas de Canaria á xv de Febrero, año Mil. cccclxxxiii.

Fará lo que mandareys.

EL ALMIRANTE.

Nema que venia dentro en la carta.

Despues desto escripto, estando en mar de Castilla, salió tanto viento commigo, sul y sueste, que me ha fecho descargar los navios ; pero cor[er]i aqui en este puerto de Lisboná [h]oy, que fue la mayor maravilla del mundo, donde acordé escrivir á sus Altezas. En todas las Yndias he siempre hallado los temporales como en Mayo. Adonde yo fuy en xxxiii dias, y volvi en xxviii, salvo qu' estas tormentas me[h]an detenido xxiii dias corriendo por esta mar. Dizen acá todos los hombres de la mar q[ue] jamás [h]ovo tan mal ynvierno, no ni tantas perdidas de naves.

Fecha á quatorze dias de Marzo.

Esta carta enbió Colom al Escrivano de Racion, de las
Islas halladas en las Indias, contenida á otra de sus Altezas.

NOTE. .

The preceding letter is on two folio leaves, or four pages, of which page 1 has forty-seven lines, page 2 forty-eight lines, page 3 forty-seven, and page 4 sixteen lines. The extra line on page 2 is almost illegible and seems to have undergone an attempt at obliteration by the printer himself. Its substance (with two small variations) is repeated on the first line of page 3. The Letter has no external mark of the date of impression, or of the place where it was printed. However, as already stated, the typographical character enables us to assert that Juan de Rosenbach printed it at Barcelona. The assertion is rendered conclusive by a number of Catalanism in spelling which disfigure the text, and expose the hand of a Catalonian type-setter.

Four leaves of contemporary paper are stitched with it, and have been no doubt its companions for nearly four hundred years. Of those four leaves the first and second are glued together, and the whole four, as we may perceive from looking at the first of them, have served as "end-paper" and "fly-leaves" in a book in which the Letter was preserved from the year 1497 until some curious hand extracted it. There is writing on all the four leaves. The matter which fills the third and fourth was written evidently in Bruges in 1497; the matter contained in the first and second (pp. 1-3) is in the same hand, but has a direct Spanish interest.

The latter is a life of Saint Leocadia who was martyred in Toledo in A.D. 304. It is headed thus:

Incipit Confessio Sancte Leochade Virginis qu obiit in civitate Tholetana
sub ydus Decembris sub Datiano preside.

The first words of the text are: "In temporibus illis dum post corporeum
Salvatoris adventum."

The other two leaves are less imperfect than those, and are endorsed

App. intposita p. dnm Archiducem ad habitum Concilium.

It is a rather important document,—the Appellatio or Appeal presented to the Archduke Philip sitting in public court in his hall at Bruges, on the 12th May, 1497, by Johannes Rousselli, Lord of Hernetes, Procurator General or Fiscal of his Highness, against the harsh and exorbitant imposition of imperial taxes upon the people of the Low Countries. The mode adopted by certain tyrannical officials to increase the revenue (and benefit themselves both directly and indirectly) by enhancing levies and forestalment of dues, had terribly injured

the states and caused many persons to fly the country. Even the rightful heads of ecclesiastical foundations had been in many places ejected by ignorant and avaricious strangers; and the condition of things called for such resistance to tyranny as St. Paul had prescribed.—Redress of grievances was promised by the Archduke. His pledge and the proceedings of the Council were witnessed in this formal document by

Gerardus Numan, Audientiarius,
 Laurentius de Blitil, Grifiarius Ordinis Velleris,
 Johannes de Longavilla
 Bartholomeus Le Fevre } ordinary Secretaries,
 Hugo Le Cocq
 Johannes Le Borgne }

and many other counsellors and secretaries whose names are not given.

In connexion with this curious adjunct to the unique Columbus letter, we may state that the Archduke Philip and his consort Juana visited Toledo in 1502, and presented to the Cathedral, *una reliquia grande de la gloriosa Virgen Leocadia, Patrona de aquella ciudad*. This statement, taken from the *Primacia de Toledo* of Castegon y Fonseca, printed in 1645, helps to account for the conjunction of the Leocadia legend and the Bruges Council decree in the manuscript leaves prefixed to the Columbus letter.

This is a suitable occasion to mention the fact that the letter here given in facsimile was in my possession for over two years, but has now taken a permanent resting-place in the fittest home that could be found for it. It forms part of the treasures in the great Lenox library of New York, where it will be carefully preserved as the first printed document relating to the New World.

LITERAL TRANSLATION
OF
THE FIRST EDITION OF COLUMBUS'
SPANISH LETTER
TO LUIS DE SANT' ANGEL.

SIR,

As I know that you will have pleasure of the great victory which our Lord hath given me in my voyage, I write you this, by which you shall know that, in *twenty*¹ days I passed over to the Indies with the fleet which the most illustrious King and Queen, our Lords, gave me: where I found very many islands peopled with inhabitants beyond number. And, of them all, I have taken possession for their Highnesses, with proclamation and the royal standard displayed; and I was not gainsaid. On the first which I found, I put the name Sant Salvador, in commemoration of His high Majesty, who marvellously hath given² all this: the Indians call it Guanaham.³ The second I named the Island of Santa Maria de Concepcion, the third Ferrandina, the fourth, *Fair Island*,⁴ the fifth La Isla Juana; and so for each one a new name. When I reached Juana, I followed its coast westwardly, and found it so large that I thought it might be the mainland province of Cathay. And as I did not thus find any towns and villages on the sea-coast, save small hamlets with the people whereof I could not get speech, because they all fled away forthwith, I went on further in the same direction, thinking I should not miss of great cities or towns. And at the end of many leagues, seeing that there was no change, and that the coast was bearing me northwards,

¹ *veinte*, typographical blunder for *xxxiii*. It is corrected in the Ambrosian quarto.

² *Andado* in text, blunder for *ha dado*.

³ *Guanaham*, blunder for *Guanahani*.

⁴ *Isla bella*, blunder for *Isabela*.

whereunto my desire was contrary since the winter was already confronting us,¹ I formed the purpose of making from thence to the South, and as the wind also blew against me, I determined not to wait for other weather and turned back as far as a port agreed upon ; from which I sent two men into the country to learn if there were a king, or any great cities. They travelled for three days, and found innumerable small villages and a numberless population, but nought of ruling authority ; wherefore they returned. I understood sufficiently from other Indians whom I had already taken, that this land, in its continuousness, was an island ; and so I followed its coast eastwardly for a hundred and seven leagues as far as where it terminated ; from which headland I saw another island to the east, ten or² eight leagues distant from this, to which I at once gave the name La Spañola. And I proceeded thither, and followed the northern coast, as with La Juana, eastwardly for a hundred and *seventy*³-eight great leagues in a direct easterly course, as with La Juana. The which, and all the others, are most strong⁴ to an excessive degree, and this extremely so.¹ In it, there are many havens on the sea-coast, incomparable with any others that I know in Christendom, and plenty of rivers so good and great that it is a marvel. The lands thereof are high, and in it are very many ranges of hills, and most lofty mountains incomparably beyond the Island of Centrefrei ;⁵ all most beautiful in a thousand shapes, and all accessible, and full of trees of a thousand kinds, so lofty that they seem to reach the sky. And I am assured that they never lose their foliage; as may be imagined, since I saw them as green and as beautiful as they are in Spain during May. And some of them were in flower, some in fruit, some in another stage according to their kind. And the nightingale was singing, and other birds of a thousand sorts, in the month of November, round about the way that I was going. There are palm-trees of six or eight species, wondrous to see for their

¹ *Encarnado* in original for *encarado* or *encarando*.

² Ten or eight (diez o ocho) ought to be eighteen (diez e ocho).

³ Should be " eighty."

⁴ Fortissimos, should be fertilisimos: most fertile.

⁵ Ought to be Tenerife.

beautiful variety ; but so are the other trees, and fruits, and plants therein. There are wonderful pine-groves, and very large plains of verdure, and there is honey, and many kinds of birds, and many various fruits. In the earth there are many mines of metals ; and there is a population of incalculable number. Española is a marvel; the mountains and hills, and plains, and fields, and the soil, so beautiful and rich for planting and sowing, for breeding cattle of all sorts, for building of towns and villages. There could be no believing, without seeing, such harbours as are here, as well as the many and great rivers, and excellent waters, most of which contain gold. In the trees and fruits and plants, there are great diversities from those of Juana. In this,¹ there are many spiceries, and great mines of gold and other metals. The people of this island, and of all the others that I have found and seen, or not seen,² all go naked, men and women, just as their mothers bring them forth ; although some women cover a single place with the leaf of a plant, or a cotton something which they make for that purpose. They have no iron or steel, nor any weapons ; nor are they fit thereunto ; not because they be not a well-formed people and of fair stature, but that they are most wondrously timidous.³ They have no other weapons than the stems of reeds in their seeding state, on the end of which they fix little sharpened stakes. Even these, they dare not use ; for many times has it happened that I sent two or three men ashore to some village to parley, and countless numbers of them sallied forth, but as soon as they saw those approach, they fled away in such wise that even a father would not wait for his son. And this was not because any hurt had ever done to any of them :— on the contrary, at every headland where I have gone and been able to hold speech with them, I gave them of everything which I had, as well cloth as many other things, without accepting aught therefor— ; but such they are, incurably timid. It is true that since they have become more assured, and are losing that terror, they are artless and generous with what they have, to such

¹ i.e. Hispaniola.

² A few lines are a little defective, and portions of words lost.

³ y havido ni aya havido noticia.

a degree as no one would believe but him who had seen it. Of anything they have, if it be asked for,¹ they never say no, but do rather invite the person to accept it, and show as much lovingness as though they would give their hearts. And whether it be a thing of value, or one of little worth, they are straightways content with whatsoever trifle of whatsoever kind may be given them in return for it. I forbade that anything so worthless as fragments of broken platters, and pieces of broken glass, and strap-buckles, should be given them ; although when they were able to get such things, they seemed to think they had the best jewel in the world, for it was the hap of a sailor to get, in exchange for a strap, gold to the weight of two and a half castellanos, and others much more for other things of far less value ; while for new blancas² they gave everything they had, even though it were [the worth of] two or three gold castellanos, or one or two arrobas³ of spun cotton. They took even pieces of broken barrel-hoops, and gave whatever they had, like senseless brutes ; insomuch that it seemed to me ill. I forbade it, and I gave gratuitously a thousand useful things that I carried, in order that they may conceive affection, and furthermore may be made⁴ Christians ; for they are inclined to the love and service of their Highnesses and of all the Castilian nation, and they strive to combine in giving us things which they have in abundance, and of which we are in need.⁵ And they knew no sect, nor idolatry ; save that they all believe that power and goodness are in the sky, and they believed very firmly that I, with these ships and crews, came from the sky ; and in such opinion, they received me at every place where I landed, after they had lost their terror. And this comes not because they are ignorant : on the contrary, they are men of very subtle wit, who navigate all those seas, and who give a marvellously good account of everything—but because they never saw men wearing clothes nor the

¹ pidiendogela, for pidiendosela.

² Copper-coins.

³ An arroba = 25 lbs.

⁴ se faran, for *se fasan*, or se fagan.

⁵ This sentence continues to be subjunctive after the word "Christians," in the Sanchez-letter of Varnhagen, and the word *aiuntar*, here translated "combine" is there *ayudar* = to aid.

like of our ships. And as soon as I arrived in the Indies, in the first island that I found, I took some of them by force, to the intent that they should learn [our speech] and give me information of what there was in those parts. And so it was, that very soon they understood [us] and we them, what by speech or what by signs; and those [Indians] have been of much service. To this day I carry them [with me] who are still of the opinion that I come from heaven [as appears] from much conversation which they have had with me. And they were the first to proclaim it wherever I arrived; and the others went running from house to house and to the neighbouring villages, with loud cries of "Come! come to see the people from heaven!" Then, as soon as their minds were reassured about us, every one came, men as well as women, so that there remained none behind,¹ big or little; and they all brought something to eat and drink, which they gave with wondrous lovingness. They have in² all the islands very many canoes, after the manner of rowing-galleys, some larger, some smaller; and a good many are larger than a galley of eighteen benches. They are not so wide, because they are made of a single log of timber, but a galley could not keep up with them in rowing, for their motion is a thing beyond belief. And with these, they navigate through all those islands which are numberless, and ply their traffic. I have seen some of those canoes with seventy, and eighty, men in them, each one with his oar. In all those islands, I saw not much diversity in the looks of the people, nor in their manners and language; but they all understand each other, which is a thing of singular towardness for what I hope their Highnesses will determine, as to making them conversant with our holy faith, unto which they are well disposed. I have already told how I had gone a hundred and seven leagues, in a straight line from West to East, along the sea-coast of the Island of Juana; according to which itinerary, I can declare that that island is larger than England and Scotland combined; as, over and above those hundred and seven leagues, there remains for me, on the western side, two provinces whereto I did not go—one of which they call

¹ *cadavan* for *quedaban*.

² *en* omitted.

Avan, where the people are born with tails—which provinces cannot be less in length than fifty or sixty leagues, according to what may be understood from the Indians with me, who know all the islands. This other, Española, has a greater circumference than the whole of Spain from *Colibre in Catalunya*,¹ by the sea-coast, as far as Fuente Ravia in Biscay; since, along one of its four sides, I went for a hundred and eighty-eight great leagues in a straight line from West to East. This is [a land] to be desired,—and once seen,² never to be relinquished—in which (—although, indeed, I have taken possession of them all³ for their Highnesses, and all are more richly endowed than I have skill and power to say, and I hold them all in the name of their Highnesses who can dispose thereof as much and as completely as of the kingdoms of Castile—) in this Española, in the place most suitable and best for its proximity to the gold mines, and for traffic with the continent, as well on this side as on the further side of the Great Can, where there will be great commerce and profit,—I took possession of a large town which I named the city of Navidad.⁴ And I have made fortification there, and a fort (which by this time will have been completely finished) and I have left therein men enough for such a purpose, with arms and artillery, and provisions for more than a year, and a boat, and a [man who is] master of all sea-craft for making others; and great friendship with the King of that land, to such a degree that he prided himself on calling and holding me as his brother. And even though his mind might change towards attacking those men, neither he nor his people know what arms are, and go naked. As I have already said, they

¹ The eleven letters in italics are omitted from the text.

² The word *vista* deficient in consequence of a hole in the paper.

³ A few letters deficient in consequence of the paper being torn. It is curious that the words from “have skill.” down to “as com[pletely]” are printed twice. In the first instance, the line which comprises them is extra-regular at the bottom of page 2, and is so blurred and broken that its duplicate presentation (with a slight variant) at the top of page 3, seems to be a deliberate repetition.

⁴ *Navidad* is the same as *Natividad*: he reached the spot on Christmas-day, 1492.

are the most timorous creatures there are in the world, so that the men who remain there are alone sufficient to destroy all that land, and the island is without personal danger for them if they know how to behave themselves. It seems to me that in all those islands, the men are all content with a single wife ; and to their chief or king they give as many as twenty. The women, it appears to me, do more work than the men. Nor have I been able to learn whether they held personal property, for it seemed to me that whatever one had, they all took share of, especially of eatable things. Down to the present, I have not found in those islands any monstrous men, as many expected, but on the contrary all the people are very comely ; nor are they black like those in Guinea, but have flowing hair ; and they are not begotten where there is an excessive violence of the rays of the sun. It is true that the sun is there very strong, notwithstanding that it is twenty-six degrees¹ distant from the equinoctial line. In those islands, where there are lofty mountains, the cold was very keen there, this winter ; but they endure it by being accustomed thereto, and by the help of the meats which they eat with many and inordinately hot spices. Thus I have not found, nor had any information of monsters, except of an island which is here² the second in the approach to the Indies, which is inhabited by a people whom, in all the islands, they regard as very ferocious, who eat human flesh. These have many canoes with which they run through all the islands of India, and plunder and take as much as they can. They are no more ill-shapen than the others, but have the custom of wearing their hair long, like women ; and they use bows and arrows of the same reed-stems, with a point of wood at the top, for lack of iron which they have not. Amongst those other tribes who are excessively cowardly, these are ferocious ; but I hold them as nothing more than the others. These are they who have to do with the women of Matremonio³—which is the first island that is encountered in the passage from Spain to the Indies—in

¹ Instead of *grados* = degrees, the text has (by a typographical error) *grādes*.

² The word *en* = in precedes "the second" in the text.

³ So in the text ; it should be Matinino.

which there are no men. Those women practise no female usages, but have bows and arrows of reed such as above mentioned; and they arm and cover themselves with plates of copper of which they have much. In another island, which they assure me is larger than Española, the people have no hair. In this, there is incalculable gold; and concerning these and the rest I bring Indians with me as witnesses. And in conclusion, to speak only of what has been done in this voyage, which has been so hastily performed, their Highnesses may see that I shall give them as much gold as they may need, with very little aid which their Highnesses will give me; spices and cotton at once, as much as their Highnesses will order to be shipped, and as much as they shall order to be shipped of mastic,—which till now has never been found except in Greece, in the island of Xio,¹ and the Seignory² sells it for what it likes; and aloe-wood as much as they shall order to be shipped; and slaves as many as they shall order to be shipped,—and these shall be from idolators. And I believe that I have discovered rhubarb and cinnamon, and I shall find that the men whom I am leaving there will have discovered a thousand other things of value; as I made no delay at any point, so long as the wind gave me an opportunity of sailing, except only in the town of Navidad till I had left things safely arranged and well established. And in truth I should have done much more if the ships had served me as well as might reasonably have been expected. This is enough; and [thanks to] eternal God our Lord who gives to all those who walk His way, victory over things which seem impossible; and this was signally one such, for although men have talked³ or written of those lands, it was all by conjecture, without confirmation from eyesight, importing just so much that the hearers for the most part listened and judged that there was more fable in it than anything actual, however trifling. Since thus our Redeemer has given to our most illustrious King and Queen, and to their famous kingdoms, this victory in so high a matter, Christendom should take gladness therein and make

¹ Chios, or Scio.

Of Genoa.

³ By a typographical blunder, *fallado* is found in the text, instead of *fablado*.

great festivals, and give solemn thanks to the Holy Trinity for the great exaltation they shall have by the conversion of so many peoples to our holy faith; and next for the temporal benefit which will bring hither refreshment and profit, not only to Spain, but to all Christians. This briefly, in accordance with the facts. Dated, on the caravel, off the Canary Islands, the 15 February of the year 1493.

At your command,

THE ADMIRAL.

POSTSCRIPT WHICH CAME WITHIN THE LETTER.

After having written this [letter], and being in the sea of Castile, there rose upon me so much wind, South and South-West, that it has caused me to lighten the vessels, however, I ran hither to-day into this port of Lisbon, which was the greatest wonder in the world; where I decided to write to their Highnesses. I have always found the seasons like May in all the Indies, whither I passed in thirty-three days, and returned in twenty-eight, but that these storms have delayed me twenty-three days running about this sea. All the seamen say here that there never has been so bad a winter, nor so many shipwrecks.

Dated the 14th of March.

Columbus sent this letter to the Escrivano de Racion. Of the islands found in the Indies. Received with another for their Highnesses.



THE
LATIN LETTER
OF
COLUMBUS

PRINTED IN 1493

AND ANNOUNCING THE DISCOVERY OF

AMERICA

REPRODUCED IN FACSIMILE, WITH A PREFACE

LONDON
BERNARD QUARITCH
15 PICCADILLY
1893

LONDON :
G. NORMAN AND SON, PRINTERS, HART STREET,
COVENT GARDEN.



INTRODUCTION.

THE Latin letter of Columbus, although plainly indicated in its heading as a translation, was for centuries considered to be the only authentic account of his voyage derived from his own pen. The existence of the Spanish original in a printed text of the period was for the first time made known in 1856, when the quarto now in the Ambrosian library came to light, and it is only three years since the discovery of the still earlier Spanish folio, which has been acquired by the Lenox library from Mr. Quaritch. The importance of the Latin letter as a collateral and (in some instances) corrected document will not easily pass away; collectors and libraries will still bid enormous prices for such rare copies of any of the four editions which appeared in 1493, as may turn up from time to time.

The facsimile of the Latin letter now offered to the public is unaccompanied by an English version, because that work has already been done several times, notably by Mr. Eames of the Lenox library a few months ago; and also because the translation appended to the facsimile of the Spanish folio announced on the wrapper of the present letter, will serve as a translation for either. Nothing therefore remains to be said here except a few words with regard to the origin, dates, and succession of the first four editions of the Latin Columbus.

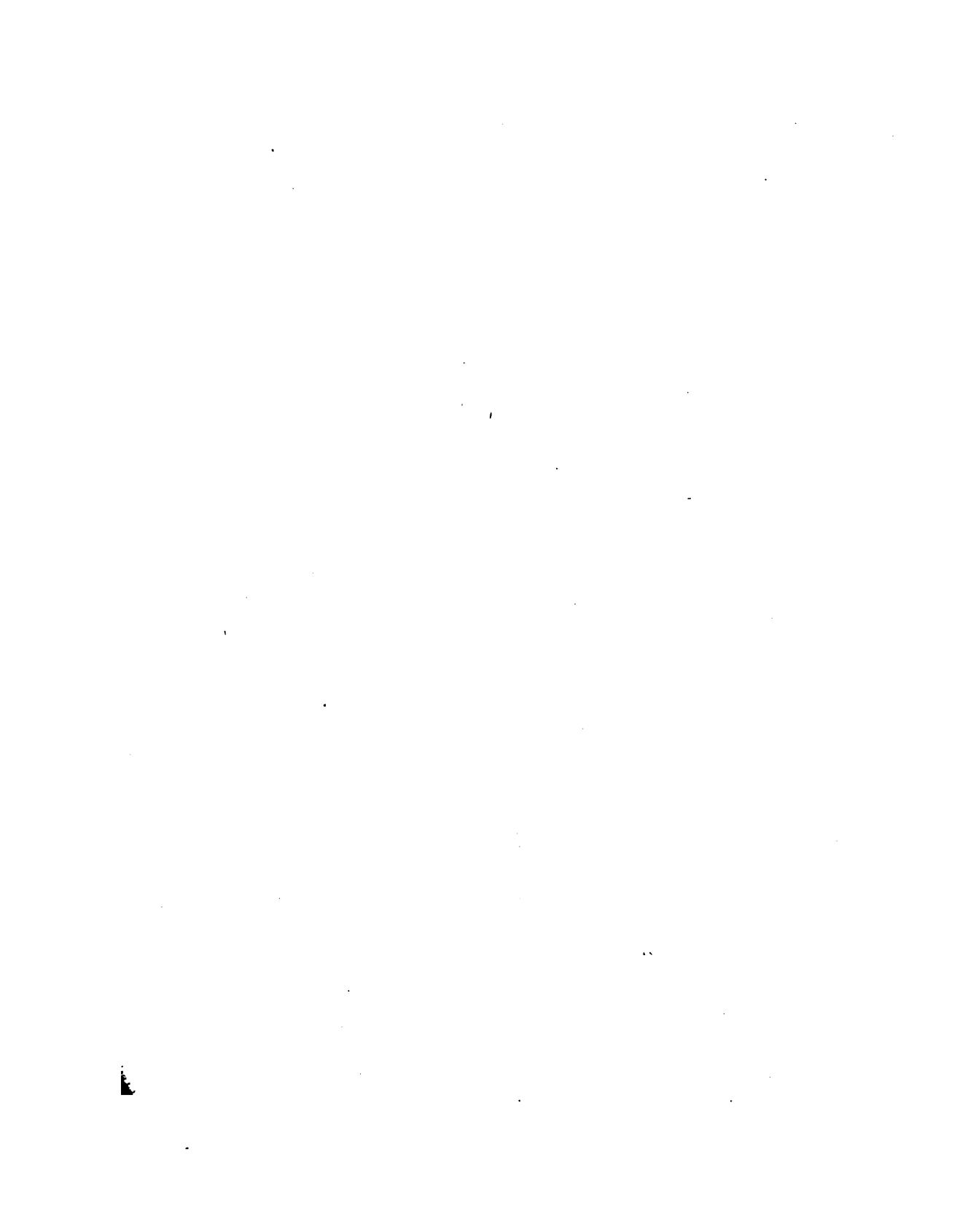
The Spanish folio was printed at Barcelona in April, 1493, probably before the middle of that month. The transmission of

copies from the Peninsula to the rest of Europe was not effected in the same manner as at present, when railway communication has made Paris the immediate recipient of Spanish traffic. Its ordinary course was by sea to Naples, where the dynasty of Aragon was reigning and where the languages of Catalonia, Valencia, and Castille were familiarly used. It was perhaps about the 22nd or 23rd of April, that the Barcelona letter reached Naples, and it was probably in that city, not in Spain, that the Spanish quarto of the Ambrosian library was reprinted from the Barcelona folio of the Lenox library. As for the Latin letter, its origin was slightly different. Columbus had addressed separate copies of the same narrative to two persons—the first to his friend Luis de Santangel, King Ferdinand's financial secretary, the second (which, from the very fact that it was secondary, contained some corrections and some errors) to Gabriel Sanxis, the Treasurer of Aragon. As the text in both was almost identical, there was no occasion to print the one addressed to Sanxis after that to Santangel had issued from the press of Johann Rosenbach at Barcelona. In any case, for whatever reason, the Spanish text so inscribed was never printed until Varnhagen gave it from a manuscript in 1858. But it was a copy, undoubtedly in MS., of the Sanxis letter, which reached the hands of Leandro de Cosco in Naples somewhere about the 23rd or 24th of April, 1493, and was rendered by him into Latin in the version which was printed four times in 1493, and has been frequently reprinted since. This Leandro was a subject of the kingdom of Aragon as his appellation shows, Cosco being a small town in Lerida not far from Balaguer. The natural jealousy between Aragon and Castille accounts for his evidently wilful omission of Isabel's name in the heading of his translation. He presented the work to Leonardus, Bishop of the Neapolitan see of Monte Peloso, a prelate of Catalonian birth, whose family name appears elsewhere Latinised as "de Carninis," but who called himself "Leonardus de Corbaria," because his native place was Corbaria (now called Corbière), a town on the frontiers of Aragon and Roussillon. The Bishop, who was no less patriotic and prejudiced than Leandro, carried the translation to Rome with

him, and, having added to it some verses enthusiastically laudatory of his sovereign Ferdinand (but ignoring the Queen of Castille, to whom Columbus was so much indebted, and whom he never forgot in writing about "Their Highnesses"), he gave it to Stephan Planck to print. Planck, who was a priest as well as a printer, produced an impression (in small quarto size, four leaves with thirty-four lines to each full page) which was published early in May, 1493. [One copy of that edition is in the Lenox library; another in the Boston library.] In the usual course of transmission to the North, which was almost always from Rome to Cologne, by the river-way from Basel, a copy of Planck's first edition reached the latter city and was there reprinted with pictorial illustrations in wood-engraving (in small quarto size, ten leaves, with twenty-seven lines to each full page). This Basel edition is very rare, and the only perfect copy known is in the Lenox library. Two reprints of the same text were also published in Paris by Gui Marchant; both probably in 1493 but dateless. Before this time, Planck had been reproved by Castilians in Rome for having produced a book so pointedly injurious to the credit of Queen Isabel. He therefore printed a second edition (small quarto, four leaves, thirty-three lines to each full page) in which Leander's words "invictissimi Fernandi Hispaniarum Regis" were altered to "invictissimorum Fernandi et Helisabet Hispaniarum Regum," Isabel and Ferdinand, although wife and husband, being equally sovereigns, the one of Castille and Leon, the other of Aragon. The name of the Treasurer, which had appeared in Planck's first edition as Raphael Sanxis, by error for Gabriel Sanxis, was altered, correctly from Raphael to Gabriel, but incorrectly from Sanxis to Sanchis. The Catalonian name Sanxis (pronounced Sanshis) had a Castilian correlative in Sanchez, and if it was necessary to make a Castilian of the Treasurer he ought to have been transmuted into Gabriel Sanchez. But the Castilianisers evidently objected merely to Ferdinand *solus* and to the Aragonese *x* in Sanxis; so that Planck's second edition when it came out had still the Catalonian *i* after the Castilian *ch*. Hence when another

edition was required, later in the same year, it was printed by Franck or Silber of Rome (who called himself Eucharius Argenteus) with two further corrections. "Fernandi et Helisabet" became "Fernandi ac Helisabet" and "Sanchis" was turned into "Sanches"; and a word on the third page, which is "noverant" in the other three editions, is properly corrected into "neverant." Generally, however, Silber's edition is less intelligently printed than the others, and the best of the four is, on the whole, the one here given in facsimile. Silber's edition is the only one of the four which is dated and inscribed. Planck's two editions and the Basel edition, bear neither name nor date. Silber's has his name "Argenteus" with place and date given as "Rome . . . M . cccc . xcij". It is in small quarto, four leaves, with forty lines to each full page; and a copy is to be found in the Lenox library at New York.





Epistola Christofori Colom: cui etas nostra multū debet: de Insulis Indie supra Gangem nuper inuētis. Ad quas pergren das octavo ante a mense auspiciis tere inuictissimorum Fernādi et Velisabæ Hispaniarum Regum missus fuerat ad magnificum dñm Gabrielem Sanchis exundē serenissimorum Regum Tresaurariū missa: quā nobilis ac litteratus vir Leander de Cosco ab Hispano idiomate in latinum cōvertit tertio kalē Maii. Mcccc. xciiii Pontificatus Alexandri Sexti Anno primo.

Quoniam suscepit prouincie rem perfectam me psecutum fuisse gratum tibi fore scio: has constitui exarare: que te vniuersitatemq rei in hoc nostro itinere geste inuenteq admonent: Tricesimo tertio die postqz Gadibus discessi in mare Indicum perueni: ubi plurimas insulas innumeris habitatas hominibus repperi: quarum omnium pro felicissimo Rege nostro preconio celebrato et verillis extensis contradicente nemine possessionem accepi: priusq earum diuini Salvatoris nomen imporsi: cuius fretus auxilio tam ad hanc: qz ad ceteras alias peruenimus: Eam bo Indi Guanabanin vocant. Aliarū etiam vnam quangz novo nomine municipauit: quippe aliā insulam Sancte Marie Conceptionis. aliam Ferdinandinam. aliam Vpfabellam. aliam Joānam. et sic de reliquis appellari iussi. Cum primum in eam insulam quam duximus Joānam vocari dixi appulimus: iuxta eius littus occidentem versus aliquantulum processi: tamq eam magnam nullo reperto fine inneni: ut non insulā: sed continentem Chatai prouinciam esse crediderim: nulla tñ videns opida municipiaue in maritimis sita confinibꝫ preter aliquos rios et pedia rustica: cum quoꝫ incolis loqui nequibam. quare simul ac nos videbant surripiebant fugam. Progrediebar ultrae existimans aliquā me urbem villasue inuentarū. Deniq videns q longe admodum progressis nibil noui emergebat: et hmoi via nos ad Septentrionem deferebat: q ipse fugere exoptabā: terris eternis regnabat brama: ad illustrumq erat in voto cōtendere:

nec minus venti flagitantibꝫ succedebat constitui alios nō ope
riti successus: et sic retrocedens ad portū quendā quem signane/
ram sum reuersus: rnde duos boies et nostris in terrā misi: qui
inuenitgarēt esset ne Rec in ea prouincia vrbesie aliue. Id per
tres dies ambularunt inuenientqꝫ inumeros populos et habitas
tiones: paruas tñ: et absqꝫ villo regimine: quapropter redierunt.
Interea ego iam intelleceram q̄ ḡb̄t̄d̄m̄ Indis quos ibidē su
scep̄rā quō b̄m̄oī prouincia insula quidem erat: et sic perrexi ori
entem versus eius semp stringēs littora usqꝫ ad miliaria cccxxii
vbi ipsius insulæ sunt extrema: binc aliā insulam ad o: iēnē pro
spici distante ab hac Joana miliaribꝫ llll. quā protius Hispan
iam dixi: in eamqꝫ concessi et direxi iter quasi per Septentrionē
quemadmodum in Joana ad orientē miliaria dixi: que dicta
Joana et alie ibidē insule q̄fertilissime existunt. Hec multis atqꝫ
tutissimis et latiss nec aliis quos vñqꝫ viderim: cōparandis por
tibus est circundata: multi maximi et salubres hanc interfluunt
fluvii: multū quoqꝫ et eminentissimi in ea sunt montes. Omnes
he insule sunt pulcherrime et varii distincte figuris: puic: et ma
xima arbor̄ varietate sidera lambentii plene: quas nunqꝫ foliis
privari credo. Quippe vidi eas ita virentes atqꝫ decoras ceu mē
se Maio in Hispania solent esse: quay alie flōentes alie fructuo
se: alie in alio statu fm vniuersiuisqꝫ qualitatē vigebant: garrie/
bat philomela et alii passeres variū ac inūmeri mēle Novemb̄is
quo ipse per eas deambulabā. Sunt preterea in dicta insula Joa
na septē vel octo palmar̄ genera q̄ proceritate et pulchritudine
quēadmodū cetere oēs arbores: berbe: fructusqꝫ nr̄as facile exus
perāt. Sunt et mirabiles pin̄ agri et prata vastissima: varie aues:
varia mella: variac̄ metallia ferro excepto. In ea aut quā Hispan
iam supra dixim⁹ nuncupari maximū sunt mōtes ac pulchri: va
sta rura: nemora: campi feracissimi seri pasciū et pendens edifici
is aptissimi. Portuū in hac insula cōmoditas et p̄estantia flumi
niū copia salubritate admixta boīm: q̄ nisi quis viderit: credulita
tez superat. Vnde arbores pascua et fructus multū ab illis Joane

differunt. Nec preterea Hispana diuersio aromatis genere auro metallisq; abundat cuius quidem et oium alias quas ego vidi et et quas cognitione babeo incole vtriusq; sexus nudi semper ince dunt quae admodum edunt in lucem: prius aliquas feminasiq; folio frondeue aliqua aure bombicino velo pudenda operiunt: qd ipse sibi ad id negoti parant. Carent ii oes (ut supra dixi) quo ciusq; genere ferri. carēt et armis utpote sibi ignotis nec ad ea sunt apti: nō ppter corporis deformitatem cu sunt bene formati: sed q; sunt timidi ac pleni formidine. gestant tñ pro armis arundines sole pustas: in quas radicib; hastile quoddam ligneum siccum et in mucronem attenuatum figunt: neq; iis audet fugiter uti: nā se peuenit cu miserim duos vel tris boies ex meis ad aliquas vilas ut cu eaq; loquerentur incolis: extisse agmen glomeratum et Indis: et vbi nros appropinquare videbant fugā celeriter arripuit: se despretis a patre liberis et econtra. et hoc nō q; cuipiam eorum dānum aliquod vel iniuria illata fuerit: imo ad quo scūq; appuli et qui bus cu verbum facere potui: quicq; habebā sum elargitus: panum aliaq; pmulta nulla mibi facta versura: sed sunt natura pauidi ac timidi. Ceterq; vbi se cernunt turos oī metu repulso: sunt admodum simplices ac bone fidei et in oib; que habent liberalissime interroganti qd possider inficiantur nemo: quin ipsi nos ad id poscē dū inuitat. Maximum erga oes amorem pleserunt: dant queq; magia pro paruis: minima l; re nihilque xtenti. ego attī phibui netā minia et nulli? precii hisce darent: et vt sunt lancis parapsidū. vitrig; fragmenta: itē clavi ligule: quamq; si hoc poterat adipisci videbat eis pulcherrima mūdi possidere iocalia. Accidit. n. quemdam nūitram tantū aurū pōdus habuisse pro una ligula quanti sunt tres aurei solidi. et sic alios pro aliis minoris preciis: p̄sertim pro blenquia nouis: quibusdā nūmis aureis: p qd habēdis dabant quicquid petebat vēditor: pura vnciam cu dimidia et duas auris: vel triginta et quadraginta bombicis pondo: quā ipsi iam nouerant: itē arcuum amphore. bydrie. dolisq; fragmenta bom bice et auro tanq; bestie comparabant: quod quis iniquum sane

erat vetus: dedicq; eis multa pulchra & grata que meū: ulerā nūl
lo interueniente premio: vt eos mūbi facilissimū xiliarem fierentq;
xpcole & vt sūt prōni in amorem erga Rēgē Reginā p̄ncipēq;
nostros & vniuersas gentes Hispanie ac studeant perquisire eos
aceruare eaq; nobis tradere quib; Ipsi affluunt & nos magnope
re indigemus. Nullam si norunt idolatriam: imo firmissime cre
dūt oēni vīm: oēm potentiam: oīa denī: & bona esse in celo: meq;
Inde cum his nauibus & nautis descendisse: atq; hoc enīmo rbiq;
fui suscep̄tus postq; metum repulerant. Nec sunt signes aut ru
des: quin summī ac perspicacis ingenii: & homines qui trans̄ res
tant mare illud nō sine admiratiōe vniuersitq; rei rationē redi
dunt: sed nūnq; ruderū gentes restitas neq; naues h̄mōi. Ego
statim atq; ad mare illud perueni e prima insula quosdā Indos
violenter arripui: qui ediscerent a nobis & nos pariter docerent
ea quorū ipsi in iisce partibus cognitionem habebant: & ex r̄to
successit: nam breui nos ipsos: & si nos tum gestu ac signis: tum
verbis intellecerunt: magnop; nobis fuerū emolumento: reniūt
modo mecum qui semper putant me desiluisse e celo: quāvis diu
nobiscum versati fuerint hodieq; versentur. et si erant primi qui
Id quo cunq; appellabamus nuntiabant: aliis deinceps aliis clas
ta voce dicentes: Venite venite & videbitis ḡetes ethereas. Quā
ob rem tam femine q; viri: tam impuberēs q; adulti: tā iuuenes
q; senes deposita formidine paulo ante p̄cepta nos certatim vise
bant magna iter itipante caterua: aliis cibum: aliis potum affe
rentibus maximo cum amore ac bensuolentia incredibili. Habeat
vnaqueq; insula multas scaphas solidi ligni: & si angustas. lon
gitudine tñ ac forma nostris biremis similes: corsu aut̄ velos
clores. Reguntur remis tantūmodo. Haq; quedaz sunt magne:
quedam parue: quedā in medio consistūt. Plures tñ biremii que
remiget duodeviginti trans̄ stris maiores: cū quibus in oēs illas
insulas: que innumere sunt: traicitur. Cumq; is suam mercatu
ram exercent & inter eos comertia fiunt. Aliquas ego harum bi
remiū seu scaphaq; vidi q; rebeabant septuaginta & octuaginta re

miges. In omnibus his insulis nulla est diversitas inter gentes
effigies: nulla in moribus atque loquela: quoniam omnes se intelligunt
ad unum: que res perutilis est ad id quod serenissimos Reges no-
strorum exceptare precipue reor: scilicet eorum ad sanctam christi fidem pueris
nem: cui quidem quantum intelligere potui facilissimi sunt et prouisi.
Diri quoadmodum sum progressus antea insulam Iordanum nam per re-
ctum tramitem occasus in orientem miliaria. ccxxii. sicut quae vis
et interuallum itineris possum dicere banc Iordanum esse maiorem
Anglia et Scotia simul: namque ultra dicta. ccxxii passuum milia in
ea parte que ad occidentem prospectat due: quas non petui: super
sunt provincie: quaque altera Indi Anna vocant cuius accole cau-
dati nascuntur. Tendunt in longitudine ad miliaria. clxx. ut
ab his quos vebo mecum Indis percepit: qui omnes bascante insu-
lis Hispaniae ambitus maior est tota Hispania a Colonia usque
ad fontem ravidum. Hincque facte arguitur quod quartum eius latus
quod ipse per rectam lineam occidentis in orientem traeci miliaria
continet. dicitur. Hec insula est affectanda et affectata non spemenda
In qua et si alias omnes ut diri pro summi Regis nostro solen-
titer possessionem acceperint: earumque imperium dicto Regi penitus
comittitur: in opportunitate tamen loco atque emni lucro et clementia
concedenti cuiusdam magne ville: cui Gratianitatis domini nomen de-
dimus: possessionem peculiariter acceperint: ibique arcem quandam
erigere exempli iussi: quem modo iam debet esse pacta: in qua bo-
mibus qui necessarii sunt vici cum omnibus in modis genere et ultra an-
num victu oportuno reliqui. Item quandam caraullam et pro aliis
construendis tam in hac arte quam in ceteris peritos: ac eiusdem insu-
le Regis erga eos benivolentiam et familiaritatem incredibilis.
Sunt enim gentes ille amabiles admodum et benignae: eo quod Rex
predictus me fratre suu dici glorificabatur. Et si autem rei ocurrent et
huius qui in arce manserunt nocere relinquent: quia armis car-
renti mudi incedunt et nimis timidi: ideo dictam arcem tenentes dun-
tarat prius totam eam insulam nullo fibi iniuste discrimine popu-
lari: dummodo leges quas dedimus ac regimen non excedat. In quibus

Ita insulis ut intellexi quicq; vni tñ plagi acquiescit: preter primas
cipes aut reges: qbus viginti hic licet. Feminæ magis q̄ viri labo-
rare videntur: nec bene potui intelligere an habeat bona pro
pria: vidi enim q̄ unus habebat alios impartiri: presertim dapes
obsonia et hmoſ. Nullum apud eos monstru reperti ut pleriq; exi-
stibant: sed hoies magne reverentie atq; benignos. Nec sunt
nigri velut ethiopes: habent crines planos et demissos: non de-
gut ubi radiorum solaris emicat calor: magna namq; hic est solis
vehementia: propterea q̄ ab equinoctiali linea distat. Ubi viden-
tur gradus sec et viginti ex montiū cacuminib;. Maximū quoq;
viger frigus: sed id qdem moderantur Indi cum loci consuetudi-
ne: cum terū calidissimaq; quib; frequenter et luxuriose vescun-
tis. Itaq; mōstra aliqua nō vidi: neq; eorum alcubi babui co-
gnitionem: excepta quadā insula Charis nuncupata: que secun-
da ex Hispania in Indianas transfretantib; existit: quā gens que-
dam a finitimis habita ferocior incolit. Hi carne humana vescu-
tur. Habent predicti biremū genera plurima qbus in oīs Indi-
cas insulas traſciunt: depredant: surripiunt quecūq; pñt. Ribil
ab aliis differunt nisi q̄ gerūt more feminæ longos crines. rrū-
tur arcub; et spiculis aruwidineis fixis ut dixim? in grossiori par-
te attenuatis bastilib;. ideoq; habent feroces: quare ceteri Indi
inexhausto metu plectunt: sed hos ego nihil facio plus q̄; alios
Hi sunt q̄ cobeunt cū quibusdā feminis: que sole insulā Mateus
nū primā ex Hispania in Indianas transfientib; habitam. He aut
feminæ nullū sui sexus opus exercent: vt tuntur enim arcibus et
spiculis sicut de eaq; plagiis dixi: muniunt se se lauinis encis
quaq; maxima apud eas copia existit. Aliā mibi insulā affirmat
sup adicta Hispana maiorē: eius incole carēt pilis. auroq; inter
alias potissimum exuberat. Huius insule et aliaq; quas vidi hoies
mecū porto qui horum que dixi testimonium perhibet. Deniq; ut no-
stri discessus et celeris revercionis compendium ac emolumentum
breuib; astringā hoc polliceor: me nostris Regibus inuictissi-
mis paruo eorum fultū auxilio: tantū aurū daturū quantū eis fue-

rit opus. tñ vero aromatum. bombicis. masticis: q̄ apud Ch̄ium
dunataxat innentur. tantūq; ligni aloes. tantum seruox bydos/
latrarum: quantum eorum maiestas voluerit exigere. it: m reu/
barbarum & alia aromatum genera que iī quos in dicta arce relī
qui sām inuenisse atq; inuenturos existimō. q̄ siquidem ego nul/
libi magis sum moratus nisi quantum me coegerunt venti: p̄e/
terq; in villa Alatiuitatis: dum arcez condere & tutā oīa esse pro/
uidi. Que & si maxima & inaudita sunt: multo tñ maiora forent
si naues mibi vt ratio exigit subuenissent. Qep multum ac mira/
bile hoc: nec nostris meritis correspondens: sed sancte Christias/
ne fidei: nostro: umq; Regum pietati ac religioni: quia quod hu/
manus consequi nō poterat intellectus: id b manis cōcessit: dī/
winus. Solet enim deus seruus suos: quicq; sua precepta diligūt
& in impossibilibus exaudire: vt nobis in presentia contigit: qui
ea consecuti sumus que bactenus mortalium fr̄s minime atti/
gerant: nam si barū insularq; quipiam aliquid scripserunt aut lo/
cuti sunt: omnes per ambages & cōiecturas. nemo se eas vidisse
asserit: vnde prop̄ vī debatur fabula. Igitur Rex & Reginā prin/
cepſaq; ac eorū regna feliciss: ma cuncteq; ali: Christianoꝝ prouin/
cie Saluatori dño nostro Iesu Christo agam? gratias: qui tan/
ta nos victo: sa munereq; donavit: celebrentur processiones. per
agantur solennia sacra: festaq; fronde velentur delubra. exultet
Christus in terris quemadmodum in celis exultat: quom tot po/
pulorum perditas ante hac animas saluatum iri preuidet. Lete/
mur & nos: cum propter exaltationem nostre fidei. tum propter
rerum temporalium incrementa: quoꝝ non solum Hispania sed
vniuersa Christianitas est futura particeps. Hec vt gesta sunt
sic breuiter enarrata. Hale. Uliſ bone pridie Idus Martii.

Christoforus Colom Oceane classis Prefectus.

Epigramma R. L. de Coibaria Episcopi Montispalensis
Ad Invictissimum Regem Hispaniarum.

Jam nulla Hispanis tellus addenda Triumphis
Atq; parum tantis viribus orbis erat.
Aunc longe Eois regio depensa sub vndis.
Auctura est titulos Betice magne twoe:
Urde repertozi merito referenda Colombo
Gratia: sed summo est maior babeda deo.
Qui vincenda parat noua Regna tibiq; fibiq;
Teq; simul fortem prestat & esse pium.





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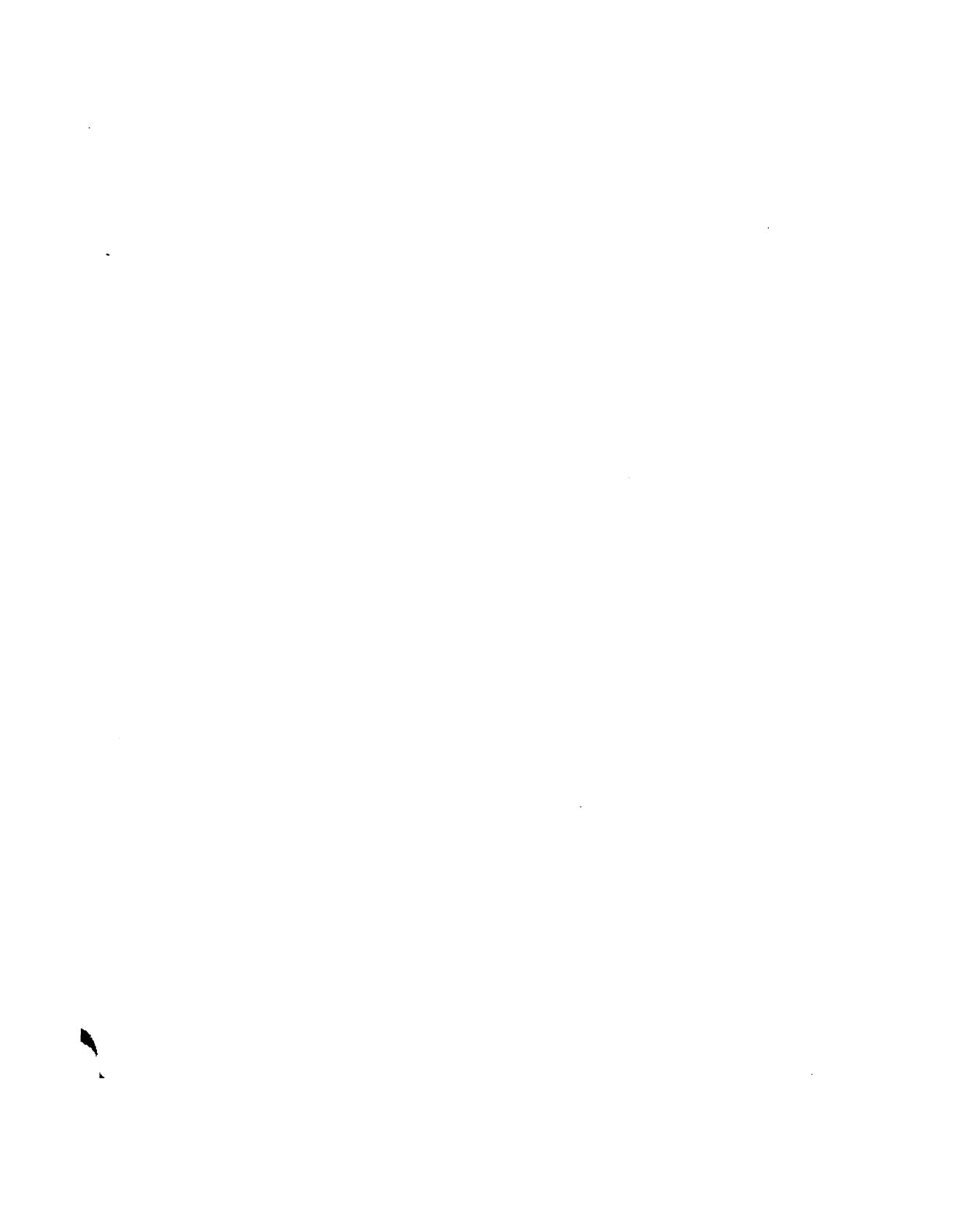




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